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## THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF PEOPLE-ORIENTED CONSERVATION ON CAT BA ISLAND, VIET NAM

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**Cover page photo:** Photo taken from the ferry at Phu Long on Cat Ba Island, 2005. (Photographer: Zoë Dawkins)

# The Social Impact of People-Oriented Conservation on Cat Ba Island, Viet Nam

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## Abstract

Due to the large number of people living within and around the boundaries of protected areas in developing countries, conservation projects often include socioeconomic development components designed to diversify livelihood options for communities practicing resource extraction. These projects are commonly referred to as Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) – a people-oriented approach to conservation. This paper examines the social impact of people-oriented approaches to conservation, in the context of protected area management in Viet Nam. Six ICDP interventions implemented between 2000–2005 within Cat Ba National Park located in northern Viet Nam are evaluated. Creative and participatory approaches to social monitoring of ICDPs are adopted in order to contribute to community participation practice in natural resource management. Findings presented in this paper indicate the limited effectiveness of socioeconomic components of the six ICDPs evaluated, which in turn has restricted their environmental efficacy. As demonstrated by this paper, a lack of meaningful community participation along with implementation and project design constraints are key causes of the ineffectiveness of people-oriented approaches to conservation, within the context of resource management in Viet Nam.

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## Acronyms

AFAP	Australian Foundation of the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific
CAA	Oxfam Community Aid Abroad
CBNP	Cat Ba National Park
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
ICDP	Integrated Conservation and Development Project
MSC	Most Significant Change is a technique
NGO	Non-government Organisations
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VND	currency Vietnamese Dong
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
ZGAP	Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

Population pressure and subsistence dependency on forest resources in Viet Nam, has led to collaboration between the world's leading conservation organisations and the Government of Viet Nam to protect the country's unique biodiversity. Protection measures undertaken in Viet Nam have primarily incorporated the implementation of conservation projects among communities bound within protected areas.<sup>1</sup> Due to the number of people living within and around the boundaries of protected areas throughout the country, conservation projects implemented in Viet Nam often include socioeconomic development components, designed to diversify livelihood options for communities practicing resource extraction. These projects are commonly referred to as Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) – a people-oriented approach to conservation. However, the effectiveness of people-oriented approaches to conservation in meeting the socioeconomic development needs, along with biodiversity conservation requirements of developing countries remains contested.<sup>2</sup>

People-oriented approaches to conservation are based on the view that successful management of protected areas must include the participation and support of local people (Brandon and Wells 1992).<sup>3</sup> To ensure the collaborative ownership of conservation initiatives, communities must be involved from the outset, engaging and linking communities and institutions in the management of ecosystems (Berkes 2004). Despite the large numbers of people living within and close to Viet Nam's protected areas, community participation in natural resource management remains marginal. Communities are commonly excluded from decision-making processes regarding the environment, and have minimal input in the development of socioeconomic activities related to conservation efforts. Moreover, given that the principal goal

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<sup>1</sup> In Viet Nam, protected areas are defined by a system of special use forest areas which include national parks, nature reserves, species reserves and landscape protected areas (see UNDP and FPD 2000).

<sup>2</sup> The effectiveness of people-oriented approaches to conservation has been called into question in response to the continued failure of biodiversity conservation efforts in developing countries, with a section of the conservation community calling for a return to the 'protection paradigm'. However, others argue that people-oriented approaches to conservation should not be abandoned, as conservation is fundamentally a political and social process, and conservation organisations must therefore take responsibility for the social impacts of biodiversity protection activities. See, Brandon and Wells (1992); Brechin et al. (2002) and Wilshusen et al. (2002).

<sup>3</sup> Brandon and Wells (1992: 561–2) identify seven critical factors to the successful implementation of ICDPs including: '(i) baseline data collection and a good understanding of the ecosystems, threats, and socioeconomic context; (ii) involvement of local people in all phases of project design and implementation in an active capacity; (iii) collaboration among governments, donors and executing agencies and a willingness to undertake 'innovative' management structures; (iv) an ability to balance the enforcement and regulatory components of the project with development objectives and incentives; (v) an ability to influence the broader policy environment which affects projects; (vi) long-term commitment of financial and technical support; and (vii) enforcement activities.'

of ICDPs is biodiversity conservation and the key implementers are conservation organisations, the impact of the socioeconomic development components of ICDPs remains uncertain.

The aim of this research project is to assess the impact of socioeconomic components of people-oriented approaches to conservation, in the context of protected area management in Viet Nam. In order to achieve this, six ICDP interventions implemented between 2000–05 within one of the country's oldest national parks — Cat Ba National Park (CBNP) — were evaluated. The results of the evaluation were then used as a case study to:

- assess community participation in ICDPs
- assess social impacts experienced by residents as a result of ICDPs
- assess and compare social impacts identified as most significant by local leaders and implementing agencies
- apply a creative approach to social monitoring in natural resource management.

Creative and participatory approaches to social monitoring of ICDPs have been adopted throughout this research project, in order to contribute to community participation<sup>4</sup> practice in natural resource management in Viet Nam's protected areas. The following introduction presents an overview of theoretical and methodological underpinnings that have formed the design and implementation of research conducted on Cat Ba Island, Viet Nam.

## Social Impact Assessment

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is defined as a process to analyse, monitor and manage the social consequences of development (Vanclay 2003). It covers a broad range of human impacts, designed to conceptualise changes to social structures, culture, livelihoods, equity, health and quality of life.<sup>5</sup> Traditionally linked with Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and large-scale infrastructure and resource extraction projects, SIA is increasingly being absorbed into the project cycle of international aid projects through activities such as social monitoring, project evaluation and impact assessment. In the context of international aid SIA ensures project objectives and 'incentives for change' are acceptable to beneficiaries (Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan 1998). SIA is commonly undertaken before the implementation of a project in order to predict and mitigate social impacts. However, it can also be used to measure social change and the impact of development interventions at any stage of the project cycle. *Ex-poste* SIA is 'the evaluation of social impacts caused by earlier development projects' (Burdge and Vanclay 1995: 32) or development projects currently implemented.

Recently, impact assessments have been extended to evaluate the impact non-government organisations (NGOs) have on the lives of the poor (Kelly et al. 2004). For example, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad (CAA) undertook an 'impact project' to develop a framework to

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<sup>4</sup> Community participation for the purposes of this research project is defined as: 'an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish' (Oakley 1991: 6)

<sup>5</sup> Sourced from lecture notes presented by Dr Andrew Walker on 19 July 2005 at the Australian National University, Canberra, for the subject ANTH8008: Social Impact Studies in the Project Cycle.

measure the ongoing impact of their work (ibid.: 696). Despite the increased attention to social change processes and impact assessment undertaken in the field of international aid, comprehensive SIA is not commonly undertaken (if we exclude large-scale infrastructure and resource-extraction projects) and organisations tend to assess only the impact of their own work, or the impact of one stand-alone project. This research project will assess the cumulative impacts of six projects implemented within one setting, Cat Ba Island, by undertaking an *ex-poste* SIA in order to capture the past and present social consequences of ICDPs.

## Case Study

The multitude of conservation and development projects implemented on Cat Ba Island, in northern Viet Nam provided the impetus for the development of this research project. A prominent tourist attraction and ecologically significant site, Cat Ba Island is under increasing pressure from domestic and international tourists, and rapid national economic growth. Fieldwork for this research project was conducted in Viet Hai Commune, situated in the buffer zone of CBNP. Viet Hai was selected based on its proximity to the core zone of the park, the commune's level of participation in ICDPs, and its listing as a remote community by the Government of Viet Nam.<sup>6</sup> Research was conducted with project stakeholders,<sup>7</sup> as well as local residents who have not participated in development interventions. The inclusion of people not participating in ICDPs was incorporated into the research design to assess the formative role proximity plays in determining social impacts. It is with the unique context of Cat Ba Island in mind that this research project has been designed.

## Integrated Conservation and Development Projects

Integrated conservation and development is an approach that aims to meet social development priorities and conservation goals, based on linkages between social settings and natural environments (UNDP and FPD 2000). The core objective of ICDPs is protected area conservation, achieved through the promotion of socioeconomic development and alternative livelihoods which do not threaten the biodiversity value of protected areas (Brandon and Wells 1992). Recognising direct linkages between conservation and development through the implementation of ICDPs, involves developing dependent relationships between biodiversity and people, so that people benefit directly from biodiversity as an incentive for conservation (Brown 2002). ICDPs encompass a wide variety of development and conservation initiatives in and around protected areas (Brandon and Wells 1992), ranging from large-scale development projects to endangered species protection activities. Protected areas in developing countries are often remote and marginal, inhabited by the extremely poor who have limited access to government services and no political power (Brandon and Wells 1992). In settings such as Viet Nam, where land and resources are scarce due to population numbers, the sustainability of biodiversity in protected areas has been threatened by population growth, migration and

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<sup>6</sup> Viet Hai was selected as the field site for this research project following consultations with Fauna and Flora International, the Australian Foundation for the People's of Asia and the Pacific, and Cat Ba National Park.

<sup>7</sup> Stakeholders for the purpose of this research project are defined as people, groups, or institutions who are likely to be 'affected by the outcome – negatively or positively – or those who can affect the outcome of a proposed intervention.' (Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan 1998: 4)



settlement. ICDPs are one mechanism used by conservation organisations to help conserve the environment and support the socioeconomic development of poor, remote and marginalised communities living in protected areas. This research project will assess the social impacts of ICDPs implemented on Cat Ba Island, a site of rapid population growth, migration and settlement in Viet Nam.

## Methodology

This research project employed a stakeholder analysis, the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, interviews with project staff and community leaders, and a review of project reports to assess the social impact of ICDPs in Viet Hai Commune. In *ex-poste* SIA there are no pre-impact measures to compare current impacts (that is, there is no baseline to refer back to) (Burdge and Vanclay 1995), therefore this impact assessment utilised data sourced from project documents and academic literature, and anecdotal evidence provided by local residents. The research was undertaken in four stages: (1) consultation with project implementers and desk review of project documents; (2) profiling of local residents and their participation in ICDPs through a household questionnaire; (3) identification of social impacts using the MSC technique; and (4) verification of identified social impacts through interviews with project implementers and local leaders.

In order to identify project stakeholders who have participated in ICDPs, a questionnaire was undertaken with a random sample of Viet Hai Commune. SIA is not merely interested in assessing impact from the perspective of those directly involved in development interventions, but rather from the perspective of a cross-section of the wider community. Whereas development interventions may only target and include the participation of beneficiaries, social impacts are often experienced far more widely than by one target group. Questionnaire results were used to determine community participation in the implementation of ICDPs, and provided a platform for implementing the MSC technique.

Identification of social impacts, and determination of the significance of these impacts was undertaken by adopting the MSC technique. A narrative inquiry research tool, the MSC technique was adopted to assess impact from the perspective of local people. MSC utilises the collection and selection of project impact stories told by beneficiaries to monitor and evaluate development projects. According to the MSC guide, the technique can provide considerable gains to: complex projects that produce diverse outcomes; large projects with numerous organisational layers; projects focused on social change; and projects which are participatory in ethos (Davies and Dart 2005). Given the context of assessing the impact of six ICDPs which have targeted social change, included the participation of local people, and were implemented in collaboration with local institutions, the unique context of ICDPs implemented on Cat Ba Island presents an opportunity to adapt MSC to *ex-poste* SIA. The following chapter will provide a critical analysis of the research methodology to be applied as part of this research project. An overview of protected area management in Viet Nam and the case study is presented in Chapter 3, and analysis and conclusions are then outlined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 respectively.

## Chapter Two

### A Narrative Approach to SIA

This chapter will introduce politically oriented and narrative approaches to SIA, before embarking on a critique of the MSC technique and its application in SIA. In particular the benefits and biases of the MSC technique will be outlined in this chapter, along with a discussion of the methodological approach to be applied in this research project. Attention to the employment of participatory approaches in the socio-political climate of Viet Nam is also addressed in this chapter.

#### Politically Oriented SIA and Narrative Inquiry

Social impacts, as previously noted, include a broad range of social change processes and outcomes in relation to people's livelihoods, food security, social structures, equity (gender, ethnicity), culture, health, and quality of life. Therefore when undertaking an SIA, researchers and practitioners need to narrow down the most significant social changes that will have a lasting impact. Research by Lane et al. (1997) has realised that in order to understand the most significant changes, it is important to understand what local people regard as important from their perspective and relative to their values. In the past, SIA focussed largely on socioeconomic indicators, sometimes known as the 'technical' approach to impact assessment. However this approach to SIA rarely assesses what is important to local people. Furthermore, in examining the case of the Jawoyn people of Australia, and the controversial decision not to go ahead with the Coronation Hill gold mine in the Northern Territory, Lane et al., adopted an integrated approach to conduct the SIA which assessed not only socioeconomic indicators, but also the values and perspective of different members of the Jawoyn community. They indicate that while the community was suffering from socioeconomic indicators comparable to those of a developing nation, Coronation Hill's spiritual and psychological significance far outweighed the economic benefit of the mine for a large number of the Jawoyn:

... when viewed from the point of view of the senior traditional custodians of the sites and their supporters ... economic considerations took a lower priority than the Aboriginal mythological doctrine that suggested that the 'whole world bin finish' if the site was disturbed by mining.

Any approval of mining at Coronation Hill threatened the spiritual basis of Aboriginal beliefs and traditional systems of authority, and could have resulted in serious impacts upon local Aboriginal psychology, health, political systems and social structures (Lane et al. 1997: 305).

Narrative methods of inquiry are an effective tool for evaluating the perspective of local people. According to McClintock 'storytelling lends itself to participatory change processes because it relies on people to make sense of their own experiences' (McClintock 2003/2004: 14). The MSC technique is a purely qualitative narrative approach to assess social change. At its core are qualitative principles which maintain an element of the rich picture (Dart et al. 2000). Storytelling is the prime vehicle in MSC for the collection of qualitative and contextualised

data, while the selection of stories demonstrates underlying values and perspectives within the project context. However, like all approaches to SIA there are constraints to the technique's application and effectiveness. Importantly, the interaction of the MSC technique with key constraints to conducting an effective SIA will be explored in this chapter.

## The Most Significant Change Technique

The MSC technique is a continuous values inquiry approach to monitoring and evaluation (M&E). It is a narrative inquiry method of data collection assessing change and impact from the perspective of stakeholders.<sup>8</sup> MSC utilises storytelling as a means of identifying and assessing the impact of project and program activities from the perspective of stakeholders.

MSC involves the collection and systematic participatory interpretation of stories of significant change. Unlike conventional approaches to monitoring, MSC does not employ quantitative indicators, but is a qualitative approach (Dart and Davies 2003: 137).

Most Significant Change is a technique for directing project outcomes towards explicitly valued directions and away from less valued directions (Dart and Davies 2003). Identified stakeholders are invited to share personal stories of change, which are routinely collected and interpreted. Collected stories are analysed and filtered through the levels of authority, until stories representing the most significant changes are selected. Results and criteria for the selection of stories are recorded and fed back to stakeholders in preparation for subsequent rounds of story collection (ibid.). The technique is an ongoing social monitoring program which feeds into flexible project design, building on successful outcomes, whether intended or unexpected. It shifts the focus from indicator-based monitoring measuring intended change, to explore unexpected personal, societal or organisational changes that result from development interventions.

Also, it is a form of participatory action research, closely linked to other such techniques, and in particular to Appreciative Inquiry. This technique was developed in the 1980s as an organisational development tool with the aim of discovering valued directions within an organisation building on previous successes, representing '... an intentional choice not to analyse deficits but rather to isolate and learn from even the smallest victories' (Finegold et al. 2002: 239). MSC is often equated with Appreciative Inquiry because both techniques elicit stories of best practice or the most successful outcomes of a project. Another similarity shared with Appreciative Inquiry is the use of storytelling. It adopts storytelling as a 'method of discovery and ... is said to work best when an environment of 'narrative-rich communication' is created' (Michael 2005: 224). Other similar participatory action research techniques include Cooperative Inquiry, based on a participative worldview that incorporates participants in the design of the evaluation or research methodology (Heron and Reason 1997); Responsive Evaluation which makes use of storytelling and context rich data collection (Van Der Haar and

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<sup>8</sup> The MSC technique was originally conceived by Rick Davies in 1996 as the 'Evolutionary Approach to Facilitating Organisational Learning'. The final incarnation of the approach was developed in collaboration with Jessica Dart (see Davies and Dart 2005).

Hosking 2004); the Success Case Method developed by Brinkenhoff (2003); and Qualitative Case Studies by Costantino and Greene (McClintock 2003/2004).

The MSC guide outlines ten key steps to the technique's implementation:

1. getting started and raising interest;
2. establishing 'domains of change';
3. defining the reporting period;
4. collecting stories of change;
5. reviewing stories within the hierarchical structure;
6. providing stakeholders with regular feedback;
7. verification of stories;
8. quantification;
9. secondary analysis; and
10. revising the MSC process (Davies and Dart 2005).

Many steps outlined in the guide are discretionary and the fundamental steps that define the MSC process include: collecting stories of change; reviewing stories within the hierarchical structure; and providing stakeholders with regular feedback (ibid.).

The MSC technique offers a range of benefits to social monitoring, particularly when applied in unison with conventional (that is technical) approaches. It balances supposedly objective and quantitative methods, with a holistic and subjective review of project outcomes. These benefits, elaborated in the following discussion, include: (1) participation; (2) qualitative and contextualised data; (3) accessibility; and (4) a catalyst for change. Like all research approaches there are limitations to the effectiveness of the MSC technique, including potential biases. Davies and Dart (2005) identify a number of biases associated with MSC including: biases towards stories of success; subjectivity in the selection process; bias towards popular views; biases towards the views of those who are good at storytelling; and participation and power constraints related to the selection of stories. In addition, the issue of anonymity and confidentiality is evident when the approach is applied within one community, along with ethical concerns associated with informed consent regarding the use and distribution of stories collected.

### *Participation*

One of the principal benefits of the MSC technique is participation. MSC is participatory because stakeholders<sup>9</sup> are involved in: deciding changes to be recorded; in the collection of stories; and in the selection of the most significant stories (Dart et al. 2000). Indeed, Dart and Davies maintain 'the central aspect of the technique is not the stories themselves, but the deliberation and dialogue that surrounds the process of selecting significant changes' (ibid.: 138). Stories encourage and facilitate the participation of non-experts, because stories are remembered as a 'complex whole' and as 'concrete outcomes' (ibid.). Such participatory approaches to social monitoring assess change and impact from the perspective of a range of

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<sup>9</sup> In the case of this research project key stakeholders include project beneficiaries, government authorities, CBNP management, partners and project counterparts, and implementing agencies.

stakeholders, and purposely involve stakeholders in the interpretation and analysis of change. By incorporating stakeholders in the development and deliberation of social monitoring, these groups are given the opportunity to collect and analyse their own information, acting less as respondents and more as participants (Mayoux 2003). MSC affords stakeholders the opportunity to participate more fully in social monitoring, and indeed in the larger context of the development project paradigm.

Despite the participatory quality of MSC, it is based on a hierarchical process of story selection which often excludes the participation of beneficiaries in the selection of most significant stories. Therefore, privileged stakeholders such as managers, government officials and donors are responsible for the selection of change stories rather than beneficiaries. This type of approach to participation is inline with what Cooke and Kothari (2001) term the 'new tyranny' of participation, where participation is used as another mechanism to implement top-down development agendas (Parfitt 2004). Comparable to Participatory Rural Appraisal, the MSC technique can further be criticised as being gender blind and failing to recognise power differentials among stakeholders. However as Parfitt demonstrates through the example of the implementation of Participatory Rural Appraisal in Zimbabwe, the method is effective and participatory when sensitive use of the technique is applied (ibid.). For example, with the case of the MSC technique story selection can avoid hierarchical processes when stories are selected by a range of stakeholders, which considers complexities such as gender and stakeholder conflict. However, the evaluator retains their position of power as sensitive application of the technique is at the discretion of the evaluator, rather than stakeholders.

### *Qualitative and Contextualised Data*

The MSC technique is a purely qualitative approach. At its core are qualitative principles which avoid simplifying project experiences into numbers and averages, but rather maintain an element of the rich picture (Dart et al. 2000). Other approaches also adopt this more qualitative and complex look at project impacts. Kelly et al. (2004) adopted what they call the 'context in approach' in the evaluation of Oxfam's advocacy work in India and Sri Lanka. Rather than focussing directly on the interventions and their objectives, this approach assesses change in the conditions of a particular context. Like MSC, the approach is value laden and perspective driven – aiming to uncover valued changes within the project context and within the larger context of participants' lives (ibid.).<sup>10</sup> Such qualitative and context rich methodologies are an important departure from conventional SIA approaches. Critics of purely quantitative and indicator-based approaches have found that technically orientated social monitoring is less likely to measure change that occurs in unexpected ways (Coates and David 2002). Moreover, an over-reliance on quantitative data does little to help understand complex questions of impact and attribution, and can risk failing to uncover the essence of change (Hailey and James 2003). As Kushner (2000) maintains, assessing change through the views and lives of

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<sup>10</sup> Another example of the use of narrative in evaluation can be seen in the use of storytelling to evaluate an intergenerational storytelling program, with the desire to conduct a qualitative and contextualised evaluation of the program. Storytelling allowed the evaluators to understand the complex character of the program, and provided insights into the lived experiences of program participants (Costantino and Greene 2003).

participants helps to measure the real value of a project.

Constraints associated with the application of a context rich approach such as MSC in a small community include the ability of the evaluator to maintain the anonymity of the storyteller. In the context of Viet Nam, the anonymity of respondents is a potent issue as ethical principles of research, such as confidentiality, are difficult to ensure. The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is a one party state, and is known for stringent censorship regarding political and personal rights, and freedom of speech. Therefore the effectiveness of using context rich data such as storytelling in Viet Nam, raises additional concerns over confidentiality and the responsibility of evaluators to ensure the principle of no harm to respondents as a result of their participation in the impact assessment process. The issue of confidentiality in the use of the MSC technique within the context of Viet Nam will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

### *Accessibility*

Stories, whether narrated or written, invite the listener into the world of the storyteller – summoned to share an intimate experience, opening up different perspectives and ways of seeing the world. Stories are told all over the world in diverse forms and they are accessible to everyone. Stories leave an impression on people. People remember stories much better than they remember the details (Finegold et al. 2002). This is precisely why Davies and Dart have adopted storytelling in the MSC technique – 'Storytelling is an ancient and cross-cultural sense-making process familiar to all peoples' (Dart and Davies 2003: 140). During the application of the MSC technique, participants become experts through the telling and selection of stories. Stakeholders analyse impact through stories, and select changes felt to be the most significant and reflective of their experiences. They remember themes of stories, and build an awareness of project context and related change and impact. Chambers and Mayoux (2005) argue that for pro-poor development to become a reality, beneficiaries must not only participate as respondents, they must have access to data collected, and play a role in analysis and decision-making processes. The MSC technique, by adopting storytelling and involving stakeholders in the selection and analysis of stories, may be able to achieve such participation by making social monitoring processes more accessible to beneficiaries, among other stakeholders.

Despite the benefit of increased accessibility of research findings, constraints associated with the use of stories in impact assessment include: respondents lack of awareness regarding the use of their stories in real terms (such as in the way stories are presented in reports and the distribution of reports); and respondents may not have the experience or education to be able to knowingly consent to the use of their stories in the impact assessment process. For example, stories collected using the MSC technique may be used as promotional material by organisations implementing projects, or in future funding proposals to donors. However this raises ethical concerns regarding the use of stories and the issue of informed consent, particularly within the context of developing countries. Again this is a potent issue given the political context of Viet Nam, which will be addressed further in Chapter 4.



### *Catalyst for Change*

The MSC technique is a vigorous social monitoring tool. It involves the regular collection and participatory interpretation of stories, designed to provide a mechanism for ongoing feedback. Dart and Davies (2003) describe the technique as a form of continuous values inquiry, searching for project outcomes and then assessing the value of these outcomes. This vigorous approach allows M&E to continually review the perceptions of beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and allows for project implementers to respond through the design of project activities. This makes for more responsive project design directed by the values and aspirations of the people who count – those who are intended to benefit from the intervention. For example, CARE International in Viet Nam has been implementing the MSC technique to evaluate the 'Civil Action for Socioeconomic Inclusion in Natural Resource Management (CASI) Program' (personal communication, T. Tran, March 2006). While the adoption of the MSC technique in the CASI Program is still undergoing a trial period and no story selection actions have taken place, CARE International project managers have been responding to the stories collected from beneficiaries to inform future activities implemented by the program. Therefore MSC can be said to act as an agent for change in the design of responsive projects and in the lives of beneficiaries. If the MSC technique is matched by an adaptive and responsive approach to project management, these insights can be incorporated into future project activities creating a catalyst for change.

While a number of benefits and constraints associated with MSC have been outlined in this chapter, it is evident that sensitive application of the technique needs to be undertaken based on the context in which it is to be applied. While this may appear to be an evasion of constraints associated with MSC, it can be argued that similar constraints are a reality of any approach used in social monitoring and with community-based research, as no single approach is suitable to each and every context. However, there are steps that can be taken to ensure constraints to the application of MSC are minimised, such as the incorporation of additional research tools and a verification process. The application of MSC within the context of Viet Nam will be further explored in Chapter 4.

### **Challenging Constraints in SIA**

In the practice of SIA there are a number of constraints to its application, from policy and politics, to approach and acceptance. Burdge and Vanclay (1996) in their research and extensive experience conducting SIA in a range of contexts, have documented a number of fundamental issues in the SIA process. These include: determining who has legitimate interests in the community; the definition of community; the role of community participation in SIA; determining which impacts are considered; how impacts are weighted; and who should be the judge of such decisions (ibid.). Such a detailed analysis of SIA is beyond the scope of this research project, however, there are a number of issues which need to be addressed regarding the application of SIA using the MSC technique. These include: access to pre-intervention baseline data; issues of prediction and attribution of impacts; the determination of positive and negative impacts; and SIA as a political process. The application of MSC in relation to these issues will be assessed here.

### *Pre-Intervention Baseline Data*

It is important to have access to good baseline data on the effected community when conducting an impact assessment. This is important as pre-intervention baseline data provides the source or platform from which to assess how things have changed or will change. In the context of *ex-poste* SIA, often baseline data is not available. MSC is a practical technique in the absence of baseline data, as it implicitly asks stakeholders to identify the impact on their lives as a result of a particular development intervention. Therefore the approach is not dependent on baseline data and measuring change through indicators, but rather by asking people to assess change in their own lives, themselves. However as MSC is not an indicator-based M&E tool, seeking the most significant, rather than the most common experiences, it ignores more common problems experienced by beneficiaries (Davies 1996). Davies and Dart (2005) identify this process as 'purposive sampling'.<sup>11</sup> MSC is defined by selection rather than inclusion, seeking the 'edges of experience' rather than central tendencies (Davies 1996). The MSC technique does this purposely to explore areas people implicitly value in relation to project outcomes. MSC is not a stand-alone technique, and therefore does not attempt to investigate the most common impacts experienced by a majority. Therefore while a limitation of the MSC technique is that it is designed to be used in collaboration with other techniques, which effectively measure central tendencies and impacts directly related to stated objectives and goals, the benefit of MSC is that it (among other techniques) is able to assess change in areas where there existing baseline data is not available.

### *Prediction and Attribution*

The prediction and attribution of social impacts is one of the major challenges in SIA. In the case of this research project an *ex-poste* SIA was conducted, hence while prediction was not applicable to this research project, attribution was a significant constraint. It is difficult to assess whether changes identified by beneficiaries are a result of particular interventions, or are simply a result of normal social change processes. The MSC technique asks people to reflect on their experiences with a given project, and to assess how the project has changed their life. Therefore it is heavily dependent on the perceptions of beneficiaries regarding the attribution of project impact.<sup>12</sup> Of course, attribution is also a limitation of other social monitoring tools. Kelly et al. (2004) identify attribution as a significant limitation in determining the impact of Oxfam's advocacy work in Sri Lanka. Their impact evaluation demonstrated high expectations associated with NGOs' ability to have a direct and measurable effect on the lives

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<sup>11</sup> Others call this cherry picking, focussing on outliers rather than central themes. White (2005) contends misrepresentation of data can occur through cherry picking, because frequently the conditions that caused identified exceptional occurrences are not explained or documented. Conversely, White also acknowledges that sometimes in order to learn what works and what doesn't work, we must look at the worst and best of practice.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the STREAM Initiative, a network of aquaculture centres in the Asia-Pacific, has been implementing elements of the MSC technique, based on Davies earlier incarnation of the approach known as the 'Evolutionary Approach to Facilitating Organisational Learning'. The M&E system developed by the STREAM Initiative includes a 'people-focussed' approach to attributing impact, which is centred on change and impacts defined by fishermen and farmers to assess the outcomes of the project. This M&E system focuses on what beneficiaries perceive and interpret as impacts as a result of project interventions (Haylor and Savage 2002).



of the poor, and the perceived lack of evidence to attribute such impact (Kelly et al. 2004). The MSC technique invites stakeholders to attribute change in their own lives to development interventions, implicitly seeking their value laden perspectives on project outcomes. In the ongoing monitoring of a project, attribution is less important as the principle purpose of MSC may be to capture such value laden perspectives. However in the context of *ex-poste* SIA, it is more complicated. In some instances people may not relate change in their lives with project activities.<sup>13</sup> Therefore attribution remains a constraint associated with SIA when applying the MSC technique.

### *Positive or Negative Social Impacts*

The definition of an impact as either negative or positive is not a simple process, as social change and impact resulting from development interventions affect people in different ways, and intersect with people's different views and values regarding positive and negative development. For example, one person may regard economic gains made through mining activities as a positive social impact, but for another it may represent the loss of traditional cultural values associated with environmental protection. As Burdge and Vanclay articulate, impacts are not inherently positive or negative, but rather they are 'subject to the value judgements of individuals' (1996: 75). Therefore stakeholder conflict can be a critical factor in the determination of social impacts in the SIA process. As the case of Viet Hai will demonstrate, the exclusion of communities from the management of local resources can lead to stakeholder conflict between local people and authorities, national park staff and management.

The MSC technique has been criticised for a bias towards perceived positive changes, due to the wording 'most significant'. Most applications of the approach have found that when asked this question, people respond with a positive answer. For example, the Albuquerque Public Schools Asthma Program implemented in New Mexico, USA applied the MSC technique to monitor and evaluate their asthma program (Peterson 2005). However, they found the approach did not capture an exhaustive list of changes, as it failed to assess negative changes. The program has now amended their application of the MSC technique to explicitly seek negative changes (*ibid.*). Another limitation associated with the MSC technique in relation to positive and negative impacts is artistry and the selection of stories. There is a risk that stories will be selected not because they represent the most significant change, but rather because the story was most eloquently told.<sup>14</sup> As Davies and Dart (2005) note, the inclusion of such rich stories can create a bias towards the views of people who tell a good story. Artistry is a difficult limitation to overcome. The only way to truly combat this limitation is to ensure participants selecting stories of significant change are aware of the artistry bias and adjust their assessment of stories accordingly. Davies and Dart (2005) also indicate artistry as a reason why MSC should not be considered a stand-alone approach.

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<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, the inability of beneficiaries to attribute social change processes with project interventions, could also indicate a weakness in the design of project activities and/or a lack of participation.

<sup>14</sup> Costantino and Greene (2003) also note that artistry was a significant challenge to the inclusion of narrative in their evaluation of the intergenerational storytelling program.

### *SIA as a Political Process*

SIA is a political process as it is seen as a means of empowering communities to participate effectively in decision-making processes regarding development (Dale and Lane 1994).<sup>15</sup> An excellent example of community empowerment through SIA can be found in the East Kimberley Impact Assessment Project conducted by Ross in 1988. Storytelling emerged in this impact assessment through community consultation, and afforded considerable power and control to Aboriginal people over the research as they were able to present local perspectives within the context of their lives (Craig 1990). Given the context of governance and protected area management in Viet Nam, a participatory approach to SIA could be highly politicised as the voices of local people are often excluded from decision-making processes in resource management. Furthermore, the complexities of stakeholder conflict between local people, national park management, and local authorities; and the multitude of ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai Commune by a range of implementing agencies has the potential to politicise SIA in this context. However, the inclusion of local leadership structures in the deliberation of impacts deemed most significant through the MSC technique, may be one way of diffusing conflict in the SIA process. As we shall see in the following chapter, the complexities of multiple projects and stakeholder conflict within the context of Cat Ba Island are significant, and therefore it is an ideal location to test the applicability of the MSC technique in an impact assessment.

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<sup>15</sup> Traditionally used by development proponents as a technical tool to assess the human impact of certain activities, it was not until the late 1980s that SIA was used as a planning tool to incorporate the cultural perspectives and values of interest groups. Since this time, qualitative approaches to social monitoring have been extensively adopted in the practice of SIA, particularly in political approaches (Dale and Lane 1994).

## Chapter Three

### Cat Ba Island, Viet Nam

This chapter will introduce the research field site of Viet Hai Commune, Cat Ba Island and examine the constraints to community participation practice in natural resource management within protected areas in Viet Nam. Through this discussion, the issue of stakeholder conflict on Cat Ba Island will be addressed, and an overview of the six ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai Commune provided.

#### Cat Ba Island

Cat Ba Archipelago is situated on the southern end of the chain of islands that make up the Ha Long Bay UNESCO World Heritage Site in northern Viet Nam. Cat Ba Island is the largest of the 366 islands in the archipelago, and one of few permanently inhabited islands in the region (Deters et al. 2001). Geographically it would have been included in the World Heritage Site, had it not been for a provincial border that divides Ha Long Bay into Quang Ninh Province, and Cat Ba Archipelago (Lan Ha Bay) into Hai Phong City Province.<sup>16</sup> The biodiversity value of the island is particularly significant as it is home to a number of rare and endangered species of plants and animals, with the most noteworthy being one of the world's rarest primates – the Golden-headed Langur (FFI 2003a). In 1986, 9,800 hectares (approximately one third of the island's total land mass) was annexed as Cat Ba National Park, the first decreed protected area in Viet Nam to include a marine component (ibid.). At the time of demarcation, many communities were subsumed within the boundaries of the National Park. While a number of these communities were established four hundred years ago by Kinh (the largest ethnic group in Viet Nam) and Chinese families, others were established following resettlement programs undertaken by the National Government.<sup>17</sup> Today the Island is home to approximately 11 000 people, and there are an estimated 2500 people living in and around buffer zone areas of the National Park. Cat Ba Island is administratively divided into seven communes, with Gia Luan and Viet Hai the only two located within the boundaries of the National Park. Khe Sau and Tung Trang (CBNP headquarters) hamlets are also subsumed within the park's boundaries.

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<sup>16</sup> In early 2004 administrative responsibility for CBNP was shifted from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Hanoi, to the Hai Phong People's Committee. Following this administrative change, in November 2004 Cat Ba Island and surrounding marine areas were listed as a Biosphere Reserve under the Man and Biosphere Program of UNESCO.

<sup>17</sup> Shortly following the end of the Viet Nam War (referred to locally as the American War), the government began to promote the Return to the Village program, targeting war refugees in urban areas. This involved the establishment of New Economic Zones as the centre piece of a five year development plan, and had led to the relocation of an estimated 1.5 million people by 1980. This program of resettlement largely involved the resettlement of the overpopulated Red and Mekong River Deltas to less densely populated areas. Migrants were provided with free transportation, housing and basic necessities to get them established. Cat Ba Island was one location among many in Viet Nam that experienced mass migration in the late 1970s through the Return to the Village program (Robinson 2003; Dang et al. 1997).

Due to the ecological significance of Cat Ba Island it has been the site of a number of ICDPs implemented over the past two decades. World leaders in the fields of conservation and development, such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Fauna and Flora International (FFI), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to name a few, have implemented projects across the island in collaboration with local counterparts. Despite the large number of projects, there has been minimal coordination of these activities and no overarching assessment of the collective impact on local communities. This is a significant deficiency given many projects support the two seemingly opposed ideals of development and conservation. An impact assessment of ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai Commune will examine the effectiveness of socioeconomic components of people-oriented approaches to conservation in Viet Nam. Furthermore, it will assess the need for greater community participation in natural resource management on Cat Ba Island. The SIA will also provide a forum for local residents of Viet Hai to share their personal stories of change as a result of ICDPs, providing an insight into the social impact of conservation on the lives of a range of people from one community.

## **Viet Nam's National Parks**

The management of protected areas in Viet Nam is centrally controlled, with no mechanism for people living within national parks to influence the management of local resources.<sup>18</sup> While such a centrally controlled and top-down approach to management fits with the Vietnamese context of management and governance, it has serious implications for local communities based in protected areas, particularly when livelihoods are dependent on the natural resources bound within national parks. When decisions regarding local conservation and development are made, local communities are restricted from participating in the planning and negotiation of such decisions. Research undertaken by Timko (2001) to determine the factors that have contributed to and detracted from local people's participation in conservation initiatives within CBNP, found that local people have been excluded from conservation discussions and from the design and implementation of conservation strategies on Cat Ba Island. According to Polet and Ling (2004), this form of national park management has resulted in severely restricted development opportunities for communities residing within national parks in Viet Nam from both a biological and legal viewpoint.<sup>19</sup> As the case of Viet Hai will demonstrate, the exclusion of communities from the management of local resources can lead to stakeholder conflict between local people and authorities, national park staff and management.

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<sup>18</sup> 'The Law on Forest Protection and Development (1991), stipulates that stakeholders other than the Government appointed management boards cannot take part in making management decisions and that all extractive and most non-extractive uses are not allowed in protected areas.' (Polet and Ling 2004: 9).

<sup>19</sup> People living within the boundaries of designated national parks in Viet Nam are often forced to move, based on the North American national park paradigm, which developed following the establishment of the Yellowstone National Park in 1872. While many countries and organisations have dissociated themselves from protected area management based on the relocation of local people, such an approach to national parks is still practiced in Viet Nam. However, there remain large numbers of people living within Viet Nam's protected areas despite restrictions communities face in terms of land tenure and resource use, and despite the government's large programs of resettlement over the past 30 years (McLean and Stræde 2003).

Despite the central control of protected areas in Viet Nam, a recent study conducted in Ba Be National Park (in northern Viet Nam) found that local authorities exercise discretionary power in the implementation of national law and policies at the local level (Zingerli et al. 2002; Zingerli 2005). Zingerli's study found that locally interpreted laws were common in buffer zone communities, where community solidarity is stronger than obedience to the state:

...in places such as the buffer zone of Ba Be National Park...communities tend to be more self-confident and aware of the opportunities and constraints implicit in policy and environmental changes (Zingerli et al. 2002: 265).

Despite this level of influence by local authorities in buffer zones, core zone communities continue to experience stringent control of natural resources. According to Zingerli et al. (2002: 265) '... where the central policies are rigidly imposed, such as in the core zone of the National Park, there is no room for manoeuvre or pluralism'. While the study found that often national policies in Viet Nam are tailored to local contexts, providing local leaders and low-level cadres with a degree of influence in the implementation of policy, widespread community participation in final decision-making processes rarely occurs.<sup>20</sup> Due to the decision-making restrictions faced by communities bound within protected areas, the creation of national parks has the potential to place considerable pressure on communities in Viet Nam, as people are dependent on forest resources for subsistence. The inability to manage such resources therefore places local people in a precarious situation, as they are unable to control the resources on which they and their families depend for survival.

## Stakeholder Conflict

Stakeholder conflict is a common occurrence in the implementation of ICDPs, as various actors take an interest in conservation and development issues (UNDP and FPD 2000). Brechin et al. claim that due to the politicised nature of conservation and development both '...the complexities of protection project and the corresponding incidence of conflict and resistance' are increased (Brechin et al. 2002: 42). In the context of Viet Nam, where local people are restricted from the management of resources locked within protected areas, conflict often arises. Findings from the ICDPs lesson learned workshop held in Viet Nam, found that negotiated agreements between key stakeholders are fundamental to the successful development and implementation of ICDPs in Viet Nam (UNDP and FPD 2000), and are particularly significant in areas of acute stakeholder conflict.

On Cat Ba Island, conflict between CBNP, local leaders from buffer zone communes and hamlets, and with administrative bodies at the district level has been commonplace since the

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<sup>20</sup> Another example is Cat Tien National Park in southern Vietnam, where five hamlets are located within the core zone of the park. Families living in these hamlets have no land title, and are unable to benefit from government and international support. Many of these communities are representatives of Viet Nam's ethnic minority communities who moved further into the forest following the colonisation of their traditional lands by the Kinh ethnic majority. These communities are treated as defacto-citizens with little rights over their traditional lands, and no decision-making powers over the management of natural resources (Polet and Ling 2004).

establishment of the Park, as each group has an interest and stake in the management of local resources on the Island. Similar to hamlets in other protected areas in Viet Nam, residents living in Viet Hai have no legal land title. All land is owned by the national government and managed by the National Park or local authorities, and is allocated to households for agriculture and housing. The four main governing bodies responsible for the administration of people, land and resources in Viet Hai are the Viet Hai People's Committee, the Cat Hai People's Committee at the district level, the Hai Phong People's Committee at the provincial level, and CBNP. This complex management structure can often lead to stakeholder conflict, as each administrative level develops individual social and environmental plans with minimal consultation with other administrative bodies.<sup>21</sup> The creation of the Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve is one attempt by the Hai Phong People's Committee and conservation organisations, to better manage the multitude of administrative layers on the island, alleviating tensions arising from stakeholder conflict.

## Viet Hai Commune

Viet Hai is registered as a remote commune faced with extreme difficulties by the Government of Viet Nam (WHO 2003). Officially there are 77 registered households in Viet Hai and a total commune population of 249 people, however due to migration and travel in search of work and for academic purposes, it is estimated that there are only approximately 50 households currently living in Viet Hai and a permanent population of around 150 people.<sup>22</sup> Many of the residents in the commune are migrants from the mainland, who fled bombing in Hai Phong during the independence war with French colonial forces in the 1950s, or who have been relocated to the commune following the end of the American War through government resettlement programs. Today, spontaneous migration is the main source of migration to the commune with 15 new families settling in the commune since 1986.<sup>23</sup>

The most common livelihood in Viet Hai is agriculture, including rice cultivation, and raising livestock such as poultry and swine, with 80 per cent of all respondents indicating their main occupation to be farming. Tourism, fishing and hunting are also common livelihood

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<sup>21</sup> Recommendations made following the establishment of CBNP included the creation of a protected-area management plan with input from local people. However, Timko found that in reality local people have been excluded from participating in the management of the Park since its establishment (Timko 2001).

<sup>22</sup> The household registration system in Viet Nam requires that members of households are registered to live and work in a particular location, and that each family nominate a household head. Based on Confucian cultural practices in Viet Nam, often the eldest male of working age is nominated as the head of the household. The household registration system mirrors that in China, which both aim at controlling population movements, particularly from rural to urban areas. However, since the implementation of the Doi Moi reform policies of the 1980s, the household registration system has been slowly breaking down in Viet Nam (although it is still enforced by law) through spontaneous migration patterns.

<sup>23</sup> Over half (62.5 per cent) of the respondents who participated in the random sample questionnaire stated that they had migrated to the commune. According to a representative of the People's Committee, people have been drawn to the area for a number of reasons. People relocate to live closer to family members, for perceived economic advantages (the area receives substantial government and international assistance), and to enjoy the peaceful setting of this remote community. Furthermore, based on consultations with local residents, there is the widespread perception that a large amount of agricultural land remains fallow in the commune, and so migrants have relocated from the overpopulated Red River Delta in order to utilise this unused land.

activities. Prior to the establishment of the National Park, local people relied heavily on forest resources for subsistence (Timko 2001). While the economy of the Island and Viet Hai have increased dramatically over the past two decades, many local people remain impoverished and continue to depend on forest resources to meet their livelihood needs (ibid.). Due to diminishing resources and environmental protection activities of the National Park and conservation organisations, hunting is increasingly difficult for local people. In response, the Viet Hai People's Committee is keen to attract government and international projects that support local economic development through promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Tourism is increasingly an important livelihood for residents of Viet Hai. Cat Ba Island is a popular tourist destination for both domestic and international travellers. In recent years, the tourism sector on the Island has experienced rapid and uncontrolled growth (Jepson 2000).<sup>24</sup> Research undertaken in 2002 found that while tourism has provided communities on Cat Ba Island with extensive benefits, it has the potential to cause undesirable sociocultural change and environmental degradation if not managed properly (Nguyen et al. 2002). Viet Hai is a particularly popular tourist destination on Cat Ba Island for foreign tourists. Tourism activities in Viet Hai are organised as day tours from either Cat Ba Town, or as part of larger 2–3 day tours to Ha Long Bay and Cat Ba Island. Tourists enter the village and walk to Navy Peak to look out over Cat Ba Archipelago. Following this they return to one of two home-based eateries for lunch. Foreign tourists are presently prohibited from staying overnight in Viet Hai,<sup>25</sup> due to concerns over the commune's remote location which is only accessible by boat or by foot from CBNP headquarters.<sup>26</sup>

Due to the location of Viet Hai in the buffer zone of Cat Ba National Park, most conservation organisations working on the island implement project activities in the commune. Therefore Viet Hai will serve as an excellent case study to represent the social impacts experienced by communities on Cat Ba Island as a result of ICDPs, and may serve as an insight into how communities bound within protected areas in other areas of Viet Nam participate in protected area management and people-oriented approaches to conservation.

## **ICDPs Implemented in Viet Hai Commune**

As previously stated, integrated conservation and development is an approach rather than a particular project, which 'aims to meet social development priorities and conservation goals' (UNDP and FPD 2000: 2). From 2000–05 six projects including ICDP approaches have been

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<sup>24</sup> Like many protected areas in Viet Nam, Cat Ba National Park has an approved investment plan, which supports infrastructure development, however does not cover investment in conservation and biodiversity management activities. This means activities such as tourism are an important economic vehicle by which national parks in Viet Nam can boost their budgets, and in some cases are the only means by which they can expend funds provided by the central government (Polet and Ling 2004).

<sup>25</sup> FFI recently conducted an ICDP to develop community-based tourism activities in Viet Hai, including homestay tourism. The project has not yet received approval from Cat Hai District to allow foreign tourists to spend the night in the commune.

<sup>26</sup> The boat trip from Cat Ba Town to Viet Hai takes approximately one hour. To walk to Viet Hai from the headquarters of CBNP takes over three hours.



implemented in Viet Hai. These range from conservation projects aimed at protecting the Golden-headed Langur, to sustainable livelihoods development projects. The projects included in this research project recognise the linkages between social settings and natural environments on Cat Ba Island, and have been designed in response to Tilo Nadler's report on the Golden-headed Langur (Nadler and Ha 2000). Importantly, this report provided data on the reliance of local populations on forest resources and the environmental impact of livelihood activities, such as honey collection, which has formed the rationale for many ICDPs implemented on Cat Ba Island.

The six projects evaluated in this research project include:

1. Contributing to biodiversity conservation of Cat Ba National Park through community activity;
2. Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project;
3. Cat Ba Integrated Conservation and Development Program;
4. Endangered Species Conservation Project;
5. Coastal Biodiversity Support Project – Ha Long and Cat Ba; and
6. Integrated Conservation and Development program for the conservation of the biodiversity and the Golden-headed Langur on Cat Ba Island.

The following chapter will provide a detailed evaluation of the socioeconomic components of these projects, in order to assess the social impact of people-oriented conservation in Viet Nam.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Government funded projects were also discussed by respondents during the questionnaire and story collection activities. In particular, economic development and infrastructure projects were raised, such as Programme 135. Viet Hai was included in Programme 135 in the year 2001, which is the government's program for 'Socio-Economic Development in Communes faced with Extreme Difficulties in Mountainous and Remote Areas.' This program has been responsible for building community health centres, safe water supply systems, schools and new roads in remote areas and mountainous regions inhabited by ethnic minority populations (WHO 2003). Another government project worth mentioning is Programme 327 entitled 'Regreening the Bare Hills in Viet Nam.' Many respondents indicated they participated in this program and have signed forest protection contracts which are managed by the National Park. These contracts entitle households to 50.000 Vietnamese Dong (VND) per hectare per year for protecting existing forests and to stimulate natural regeneration. Programme 327 has been the cause of considerable stakeholder conflict between local people and the National Park, as it has been criticised by local people for corruption in the selection of participants, and recently an investigation was undertaken by local police of National Park staff who have reportedly rorted many households out of the money due to them for protecting the forest. The recruitment and selection process has since been reviewed, and by all accounts is now being implemented in a more transparent and equitable process (Deters et al. 2001).



## Chapter Four

### Analysis

This chapter will provide an analysis of the impact assessment conducted in Viet Hai Commune. A summary of stories of change, including an overview of the most positive and negative social impacts as identified by local people using the MSC technique will be included, along with a comparison of impacts deemed most significant by local leaders and project implementers. The verification of stories collected will also be analysed in this chapter based on project reports and interviews held with project staff based on Cat Ba Island.

#### Stakeholder Analysis and Community Questionnaire

To begin the impact assessment process, a stakeholder analysis was first undertaken using a household questionnaire. The household questionnaire was aimed to be undertaken with all households<sup>28</sup> of the commune over a period of four days. In the end one member from each of 40 households in the commune were interviewed, representing 80 per cent of the total households. Half the respondents interviewed were women, and respondents interviewed were between 23 to 71 years of age. The purpose of the questionnaire was to profile stakeholders in the community, including demographic data and the participation of local people in ICDPs. The questionnaire was also used as an opportunity to assess people's expectations of ICDPs and the role they play in their lives. An overview of the range of responses in the broad domains of participation, the role of ICDPs in people's lives and people's expectations of conservation and development projects is provided here.

#### *Participation*

Out of the 40 people interviewed in Viet Hai via the household questionnaire, 25 people had participated in at least one ICDP, with many having participated in more than one project between 2000–05. The most common participatory mechanisms used included nomination, voluntary participation, and membership of an existing association or union.

Firstly, the selection by nomination of people to participate in projects was facilitated by the People's Committee or local institution responsible for the implementation of project activities at the local level. The ranger department of Cat Ba selected suitable people to participate in

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<sup>28</sup> This involved visiting each household in the commune and conducting a questionnaire with one adult male or female from the household. Residents of Viet Hai were also interviewed in rice fields adjacent to the commune, as many people work in the fields during the day. During these interviews, respondents were asked which household they were from, so that an additional member of the household was not interviewed. Only in one instance were two members from one household interviewed, and this was at the request of the respondents to participate. Initially it was hoped that a representative from each household in Viet Hai would be interviewed, however after numerous visits and attempts to conduct the questionnaire with some households, time restraints and respondent availability restricted the questionnaire to 40 out of 50 potential respondents.

the project, and they sent out documents to the community requesting participation, and seeking cooperation from local authorities.

Secondly, participation in projects was facilitated through community meetings organised by the People's Committee, where those interested in the given project were invited to volunteer to participate. The organisation came to the village and explained the project to the community. They did an economic analysis, comparing our income now with the income we could earn from tourism. They told us we could sign up as members and agree to actively take part in the project. We had to vote for leaders and pay for membership. We agreed to meet regularly, and we had to agree to upgrade our facilities. Because Viet Hai is in the National Park, many projects have come here to protect the forest and help with people's livelihoods to stop them destroying the forest. They go through the People's Committee, who calls for people interested in these projects.

The third mechanism for community participation was through membership of a mass organisation.<sup>29</sup> 'Through the Women's Union. They told all the women about it, and anyone wishing to take part was invited to sign up' (Kerkvliet 2004).

In the discussion of ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai and community participation, undertaken with local residents, noticeably two projects were mentioned the least. The first project, 'Endangered Species Conservation Project,' was not discussed by any local residents and only two respondents mentioned the most recent project, 'Integrated Conservation and Development program for the conservation of the biodiversity and the Golden-headed Langur on Cat Ba Island.' The two respondents who discussed this project had participated in veterinary training as part of the project. There are two possible reasons for the failure of local people in identifying these projects. Either it represents a lack of participation of local residents in the implementation of the project and associated activities, or activities undertaken as part of this project have been associated with another project, such as the 'Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project.'

### *Role of ICDPs in People's Lives*

During the questionnaire, people were asked to rank the importance of ICDPs in their lives, based on a scale of one to five – one representing 'not important,' five representing 'very important.' Over half the respondents stated that ICDPs were important in their lives, and in most cases additional comments about the effectiveness of these interventions were made. A summary of ICDP ranking and comments made by local residents is provided in Table 1.

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<sup>29</sup> Mass organisations are state institutions representing the interests of their members. These organisations are considered civil society organisations, yet they remain closely linked to the government. Village, commune and district branches of mass organisations help to fund and administer projects that provide loans, organise social and political activities, and assist members (Kerkvliet 2004).

Table 1: Ranking of ICDPs from one (not important) to five (very important).

Rank 1–5	Number of respondents	Comments
1	7	I don't really want to answer this question, because if I was selected to participate I would think ICDPs are important. The projects are applied to a larger area, but my family doesn't participate in them. Apart from the beekeeping. But all our bees flew away. I support the projects, but I don't participate in them because they are in the trial stage and only selected families participate.
2	1	No comment.
3	6	I can't say that they are not important, and I would like to say that they are important, but they haven't been able to help the village. I would like them to be more important.
4	11	I think they are important because they are trying to help the community in improving their income. Unfortunately they have not been successful. I would like to see some successful projects. We are listed as a remote area and we are grateful for the assistance the projects provide.
5	10	They are important because they provide assistance and improvement to the community, especially the poor. They appreciate the assistance. But in reality, they have not been implemented successfully. They are important because without these projects, people would just destroy the environment. The environment is very important for my business.
No ranking	5	If the projects are carried out and implemented effectively, they would be very important. For example, providing clean water for the community. And protecting the Langur as it is unique to Cat Ba, and Viet Hai has the largest colony. And vegetables, as Viet Hai is known for organic vegetables. If these things were carried out well, it would be important for people's lives. I don't know, because I haven't taken part in any projects. But I know there are projects going on in the village, and people seem to take part in them.

Following the ranking exercise, respondents were asked to describe the role that ICDPs play in their life. A range of responses were recorded, outlining the effectiveness of ICDPs in the community and for local people. In particular, it was interesting to note that few people commented on the role of projects in their individual life, but rather referred to the role of ICDPs in general for the community. For example, one local farmer stated:

They play an important role because they increase the income of locals, the community and the whole province. If the community-based tourism project was successful, it would provide income and employment for lots of people. For example, motorbike taxi drivers, selling vegetables, and tea shops for tourists.

Within the socio-political context of Viet Nam, talking about personal gains is generally viewed as selfish, and consequently people are reluctant to talk about their personal experiences. Therefore many responses to this question lead to a general evaluation of the effectiveness of different projects implemented in the commune, as the following response demonstrates:

There are projects that have been affective, such as the langur project which has generated income through employment, and the langurs attract people to the village, and it instils the importance of the langur. I think this is important even though I am not part of the project. The other projects have not been so successful, such as the beekeeping project. Technical assistance has been provided, but there are many problems with the bees, they either died or flew off. The vegetable growing project was also not successful. I'm not sure if it was because people didn't follow the project properly, or it just stopped. It seems projects start well, but then they just don't go anywhere. Its important to have development projects here to help conservation projects. But they need to be sustainable.

Overall it is possible to conclude that while local residents in Viet Hai appreciate the assistance provided by ICDPs, there are many concerns over the effectiveness of such interventions, and in particular the socioeconomic components of these projects. For example, as one local resident aptly stated:

These projects are very important to the community. Theoretically they are important, by protecting the environment, the langur, and introducing new crops and vegetables. But the economic value has actually been quite small, so people still have to rely on the forest. I have been here a long time, and I know people go into the forest to collect different things.

The level of participation in projects was also an indicator of how important people thought ICDPs were in terms of their own lives. Those who had not participated in ICDPs were less likely to see them as important.

### *Expectations*

When asking respondents about their expectations of ICDPs, again collective rather than individual answers were provided. Almost all responses included reference to improving the living standards of the community, increasing employment and livelihood choices, and providing incentives for economic growth. Only a few respondents referred to environmental conservation, as this statement from one local resident reveals:

I hope it would improve life and our living standard. I hope they would bring better material conditions and improve the economy. Improve the community.

Importantly, this component of the questionnaire exposed people's expectations of projects in general, and the perceived benefits of being a participant in ICDPs. In some instances, people who were not suited to project activities joined due to the expected benefits of participating in a project. In Viet Nam to ensure people attend workshops, training and conferences, participants are also paid to attend. This system is designed to compensate poorer households who depend on their labour for survival. However, a statement made by one respondent in Viet Hai demonstrates a consequence of this type of participatory system:

I hoped they would all be effective and help people increase their income. The failure of projects, however, is not always the projects fault. Some people get really involved in the projects, and invest their own money to make it happen. Other families see projects as receiving financial assistance, but they never do anything. For example, the Bee Club has members who have never kept bees. People just think being in a club will be profitable. People got paid 20.000 VND a day to attend the beekeeping training, and they were given shirts. They are hoping they will get more.

As this statement demonstrates, the expectation of profit from projects can in the first instance lead to inappropriate people participating in project activities, and secondly highlights the expectation that a direct and tangible financial benefit will result from participating in ICDPs. However, as will be explored further in the following discussion of stories of significant change, many project outcomes of ICDPs are intangible and not easily quantifiable.

## Stories of significant change

Following the completion of questionnaires conducted with local people from Viet Hai, data was collated and a purposive sample designed to implement the MSC technique, the primary tool for assessing impact. Due to the bias in the MSC technique for generating positive stories, and the desire to keep the questions as open as possible, only two domains of change<sup>30</sup> were determined for the collection of stories: (1) the most positive changes as a result of ICDPs; and (2) the most negative changes as a result of ICDPs. Out of the 40 people who responded to the questionnaire in Viet Hai, 11 people were selected to participate in the story collection phase of the impact assessment, based on their participation in ICDPs, gender, occupation and status in the community, and willingness to participate in additional stages of the research project.<sup>31</sup> An overview of positive and negative change stories is provided here.

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<sup>30</sup> Domains of change are broad categories of change. They are used to manage the story selection process, and can be either used to distinguish stories by content, or by stakeholder groups.

<sup>31</sup> During a number of interviews with people when conducting the questionnaire, it was evident that some members of the community did not want to participate in the research project as they were nervous about their participation and retribution from authorities. Therefore it was decided that people who considered themselves to be at risk, or had no desire to participate in the research project, should not be included in further activities.

### *Positive Change Stories*

Central themes of the collected stories have been drawn together and grouped into three categories of positive change: capacity building and training; environmental education and biodiversity conservation; and income generation. Due to the small size of the commune and ethical issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity, stories collected from respondents in Viet Hai were read back to each storyteller for verification. Moreover, the use of stories in story selection meetings with local authorities and project staff, as well as the publication of stories in this thesis and other publications was reiterated during these meetings. One respondent indicated they no longer wished to participate in the research project, and therefore one story has been removed from the analysis of positive change stories.

### *Capacity Building and Training*

One of the central themes to emerge from positive change stories as a result of ICDP interventions in Viet Hai, was the acknowledgement of training provided and capacity building in technical areas. These included participation in study tours, training courses and access to new technology. In particular, respondents identified the benefit of knowledge generation as a significant positive outcome from ICDPs:

The project organized a study tour to Sapa, and I also attended. We were able to learn a lot from the study tours. For example, about service, community-based tourism, being a tour guide, homestay, and cooking. I have general knowledge about these things. We also visited some ethnic minority communities like Ban Ho and Ban Xom Trai to see what conditions they have there. We were able to see how they do tourism and we learned from their example. That was a good way to learn. The second thing was the cooking course. The project provided two cooking courses. Although I didn't attend that course myself, but my staff were able to learn how to prepare food, different types of meals that tourists prefer, and about hygiene. And I could see that this training was very successful. We got a lot of benefit from it, because it gave us a lot of knowledge about tourism.

Despite evidence from stories collected in Viet Hai to suggest that ICDP interventions in the commune are largely regarded as failures, local people were able to identify a number of benefits as a result of participation in ICDPs. For example, one respondent noted experience gained from participating in projects as a positive outcome of ICDPs, even though the projects were regarded by the respondent as ineffective overall:

... projects can provide local people with more knowledge when experts come and teach local people, and show them how to do things, and new approaches to economic development. Take tourism for example. People need to think about how to receive visitors, how to serve visitors, and how to behave. That is a lesson from the project, and also how we sell our products, and what tour guides should do and say in order to make visitors remember the place...That is the most successful aspect right? For example, the vegetable growing project. If we didn't have people come to teach us, we would not know a lot of technical knowledge such as when the best time to do something is, and what kind of seeds and insecticides should be used...Even though that project was not successful, in the future if people want to do that activity again, they will know what they should avoid. So projects might

not meet their objectives, but they still have meaning for local people. That is the most positive thing.

### *Environmental Education and Biodiversity Conservation*

Importantly for the ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai, environmental education and biodiversity conservation were identified as positive changes in the community as a result of project activities. Furthermore many people interviewed through the household questionnaire, and those who provided stories of change, demonstrated extensive knowledge and understanding regarding the link between environmental conservation, economic development and sustainability. In particular activities associated with protection of the Golden-headed Langur were generally viewed as having a positive impact on local people. For example, the following excerpt from one positive change story highlights local awareness of linkages between conservation and social development within the community:

I only understand basically that the conservation of rare species of animals is meant to bring long-term benefits, but I don't really know what those benefits are. But indeed we can see some benefits. If we protect the animals well, the first benefit will be from tourism. If people call this area Cat Ba National Park, then it should be a park. If there are only a few trees, nobody will want to come back here. And if Cat Ba National Park protects animals well, more tourists will come. And when the tourists come to Cat Ba, it means that they will come to Viet Hai. Then not only my family, but also others, can generate an income from tourism. For example growing vegetables to sell, or selling poultry, or even working as a motorbike taxi driver. There are many motorbikes here. These are some short-term benefits. We haven't seen the long-term benefits yet. If we preserve rare animals here, then tourism can be developed well, and local people can have more income when we have more tourists.

While the respondent here clearly links environmental conservation with tourism development in the commune as an economic activity, the connection with increased agricultural productivity was also raised by one respondent:

In my opinion, the biggest impact of the projects on the lives of local people here has been to help people understand environmental protection and animal conservation. Actually thanks to the help of these projects, the number of people going into the forest to cut down trees and hunt animals has been reduced remarkably. In 1999, when I first came here, a number of people would take guns into the forest, and many children would use slingshots. Instead, people now pay more attention to agricultural production and gardening.

This passage from one story highlights the recognition of environmental protection in the commune, and its relationship to the development of income generation activities such as agriculture and tourism. However, as will be discussed further in this chapter, constraints to the realisation of the economic benefits of conservation in Viet Hai continue to impact the effectiveness of ICDPs.

### *Income Generation*

The potential to earn an income from socioeconomic components of ICDPs in Viet Hai was widely recognised by the community, both through responses to the household questionnaire and again highlighted in stories collected from respondents. For example, membership of the Commune Langur Protection Group<sup>32</sup> and associated income was identified as a significant positive outcome of ICDP interventions in Viet Hai:

My family has a member that helps protect the forest so we earn 200.000 VND per month from that. That amount is not a lot, but it can solve some difficulties for my family through its economic contribution.

The ability to earn an income was also associated with beekeeping and honey collection, and tourism activities which were associated with the protection of the Golden-headed Langur:

In general, these projects are very important. This is not only my opinion but also the opinion of the authorities. Without the Golden-headed Langur, living conditions of this island would be very poor. Thanks to this animal, this island has become a tourism destination, which helps residents here earn higher incomes than possible through agricultural activities. Tourism has become the cutting edge economic activity in this area. Tourists come here just to see the Golden-headed Langur.

Conversely, many of the economic benefits associated with tourism were not identified by local people as being directly related to community-based tourism activities implemented by the 'Coastal Biodiversity Support Project – Ha Long and Cat Ba,' due to a number of setbacks experienced with the implementation of the project. Rather, tourism development was associated with conservation activities such as protection of the Golden-headed Langur. However, it should be noted that in general tourism is regarded by residents of Viet Hai as one of the most important potential means of socioeconomic development.<sup>33</sup>

### *Negative Change Stories*

During interviews conducted, respondents' views on the negative impact of ICDP interventions were also collected and five stories of negative change recorded.<sup>34</sup> From the five stories collected three central themes of negative impact have been determined: poorly designed projects; lack of project coordination; and financial debt. These categories of negative impact will be addressed here.

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<sup>32</sup> The Commune Langur Protection Group in Viet Hai was established and continues to be funded by the 'Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project.'

<sup>33</sup> The importance placed on tourism may, however, be a result of the 'Coastal Biodiversity Support Project' and associated community-based tourism activities in the commune. Furthermore, the two families with tourism businesses in Viet Hai, are two of the wealthiest households in the commune.

<sup>34</sup> Some respondents did not identify negative impacts from ICDPs, and I was unable to verify one negative change story. Due to the sensitive content of the story, it has not been included in the final discussion in order to protect the storyteller.



### *Poorly Designed Projects*

As previously mentioned, many of the projects implemented in Viet Hai refer to Nadler's report on the Golden-headed Langur as a rationale for project activities. While this report is a valid scientific report on the Golden-headed Langur and biodiversity threats to the local environment, it is not a comprehensive sociocultural and economic analysis of the local area. Although projects have also included the use of experts from Hanoi and universities in Viet Nam to conduct research and training on specific topics, such as beekeeping and soil suitability for agricultural production, there is the perception within the community that a lack of thorough research has resulted in project failure:

If the experts just base their ideas on paper, based on this principle or that principle, then how can they ever know about Viet Hai? The character of the local people here and their daily life. The infrastructure, what conditions are good here. So when programs are developed, they need to be based on these things, otherwise they will never be successful. So my recommendation is that good research will create successful projects.

The perception amongst local residents of Viet Hai is that the input from local people has not been included in the design of ICDP approaches. For example, the following statement highlights the lack of local consultation in the design of project activities:

Like I said, a lot of projects have been implemented here, but they are only short-term and not sustainable. Because local people here have limited knowledge, and a lack of information, so we cannot achieve economic success. I hope that following this discussion, my comments will contribute to the better development of plans to implement activities here. It should come from local people, not from the authorities.

### *Lack of Coordination*

A perceived lack of coordination between projects and by local authorities in the management of multiple projects was also identified as having a negative impact on the local community, and contributing to project ineffectiveness. As is evident from the overview of ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai in Chapter 3, many of the projects in Viet Hai have been implemented concurrently. Individual ICDPs appear to be implemented in isolation from other projects and with minimal coordination of how the activities of one project impact the activities of another. This perception was demonstrated by one respondent during the collection of negative change stories:

I am talking about all projects, carried out in the same place, at the same time. Like in big cities or industrial areas. One agency makes a road and the other one just digs it up again. Its almost the same here, all projects jump in at same time, and one project destroys the other. I will give you an example. Now, I will concentrate on beekeeping, instead of agricultural development. The human impact occurs when people go into the forest to collect local bees to keep at home, and they need technical interventions to keep the bees here. Then, people also have to follow agricultural projects implemented by the government. So it seems there is no master plan. And they have opposite objectives, one is for agricultural development, and the other beekeeping development.

Beekeeping activities have been implemented by a number of organisations on the Island – the Cat Hai District Women's Union, FFI and the Australian Foundation of the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP). However, according to project staff the effectiveness of beekeeping interventions in Viet Hai has been less obvious than activities implemented in other communes on the Island. Many local residents believe the constraints they have faced maintaining bee colonies has been the impact of using fertilisers and pesticides in the implementation of other agricultural projects. Regardless of whether this is the cause of constraints to beekeeping, it is evident that a lack of project coordination has an impact on the community. As the following statement reveals, the perceived failure of projects has led to disillusionment within the community regarding the effectiveness of ICDPs:

At the beginning of this project people were very active. At first local people here were very happy about the project, but then the bees started to go away, and no one from the project was here to help or provide guidance, so everything just stopped and we don't know why.

### *Financial Debt*

The most commonly mentioned negative social impact recorded as a result of ICDP interventions was financial debt. Four of the five negative change stories collected from residents in Viet Hai described the impact of financial debt incurred through growing vegetables, as part of the project 'Contributing to biodiversity conservation of Cat Ba National Park through community activity'. The four respondents who discussed the impact of this project stated that most households in Viet Hai were in debt to the sum of one million VND or more, as a result of vegetable growing models implemented by the project. A number of families have managed to repay the debt, however other households continue to owe money. The following story excerpt highlights the impact of this project on beneficiaries' lives:

Some households are doing business with tourism. So they can buy vegetables from local people here. The economy is getting better. But in 2001, we were very poor. My house at that time was as small as the kitchen. The project knew our poverty but they still brought the unsuccessful project here. So many households lost money. Everyone had to pay the cost of the seeds. They knew clearly how poor we were but they didn't do what they promised. That's why we felt disappointed. They told us that there were good conditions to grow vegetables here and promised to get buyers to come here. We couldn't harvest the onions but we could harvest the cucumbers, but nobody came here to buy them. Households who had a lot took their produce to the market, but those with a little bit just gave the cucumbers to others or fed them to the pigs. Nobody came to collect the produce.

The negative change story presented in Appendix 1, highlights the disappointment and frustration that has resulted from the failure of this project, and subsequent financial debt faced by households in the village. It again highlights the conflict between expectations of a project, which in some instances are the fault of project implementers who paint unrealistic pictures of project outcomes (although well-intentioned); and miscommunication between implementers and beneficiaries, which may highlight a lack of community participation in the design and implementation of projects. When asked why the social impact from this project was the most significant, one respondent stated:

Because we didn't make any money, and we ended up in debt. First they calculated that we would make a lot of money, millions of VND. They said everyone would become rich, but then at the end we all owed the project money. They calculated that we could make 500 VND per cu (400 m<sup>2</sup>) of land, and so if you have 2,000 cu of land, you could earn a lot of money. But in the end we didn't make any money, we lost money.

Furthermore, the project demonstrates poorly designed projects for the context of Viet Hai. As supported by my interview with a representative from the Cat Hai District Women's Union, the majority of households in Viet Hai participated in this project, and particularly in vegetable growing models. Due to the isolated setting of the community which has limited access to markets, it was difficult for households to sell their produce outside the commune.<sup>35</sup> Households were also unable to sell their produce within the commune as most households were growing vegetables as part of the project, as the following story clearly reveals:

The project was not successful because too many families participated and there was nobody to buy the produce. We grew the vegetables well, and they grew very successfully, but nobody bought them. Even when we sold them at a cheap price nobody bought them. After that we just used them to feed the pigs.

Respondents involved in this project stated their lack of awareness regarding the details of the project and how much of the financial investment they were required to repay. Households also shared their seeds with other families in the commune, which may have exacerbated the negative impact of the project. The circumstances of project implementation as described by respondents, highlights the lack of participation of beneficiaries, poor communication between project stakeholders, and possibly a lack of capacity within steering committees established to implement the project at the local level.

Negative change stories presented here highlight social impacts from ICDPs as identified by local residents in Viet Hai Commune. They also highlight the complexities in determining negative and positive social impacts, and constraints to the effectiveness of people-oriented conservation. For example, in many respects ICDP approaches have resulted in positive social change from the perspective of local residents. However when combined with the expectations of the local community and negative impacts incurred, these projects are largely viewed as a failure within the community. The following section will outline social impacts deemed most significant by local authorities and project staff.

### *Story Selection and Identification of Most Significant Changes*

Two meetings were held to select stories of most significant change from those collected in Viet Hai. The first meeting was held with three representatives from the Viet Hai People's Committee. The second meeting was held with four representatives from the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP), AFAP and FFI. Unfortunately

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<sup>35</sup> One respondent also mentioned to me that because people in Cat Ba Town knew residents from Viet Hai Commune had to sell all their produce and return to the commune the same day, they would wait until the end of the day to buy their produce in order to get a cheaper price.

a representative from the Women's Union was not available to attend this meeting. Both groups were provided with the same 15 stories to read. Also, it is important to mention here that a third meeting with a group of local residents from Viet Hai was planned and scheduled, however only one person attended the meeting and therefore it was cancelled.<sup>36</sup> This section will present the stories selected by the two representative groups, and analyse and compare the choices made by each group.

### *Most Positive Social Impacts*

Representatives of the Viet Hai People's Committee chose two stories to represent the most significant positive change stories – Story One and Story Two (see Appendix 1). Story One was described by the group as a story about protecting endangered species and particularly the Golden-headed Langur. They stated it was also a story about community-based tourism in Viet Hai. This story was chosen by participants at the meeting as it was considered to be most representative of the situation in Viet Hai. In particular, representatives of the People's Committee highlighted that it raised the issues of biodiversity conservation and economic development. The story highlighted to this group that without the Golden-headed Langur, tourism would suffer, and therefore protecting the environment will help to improve the local economy. It story was also chosen as it dealt with the issue of environmental education, and the difficult task projects face convincing people not to extract forest resources when they are dependent on these resources for survival.

In addition, Story Two was also selected by representatives from the People's Committee. The group described the story as being about community-based tourism and the obstacle higher authorities at the district level have created to the successful completion of the project. The group stated that district authorities had introduced the project to the commune and now will not provide permission to establish community-based tourism. They also made the point that if the district develops a project in Viet Hai, they should then support the project until it is successful. The story was chosen by the People's Committee as it demonstrated administrative problems related to project implementation within the local area. When asked why this story was selected as one of the most significant, the group stated that although the story discussed one particular project, it raised concerns about the administration of projects. As one respondent stated: 'If the authorities have reviewed the projects, and they fit into their master plan, then they should support the project until there is a positive outcome.'

The group of representatives from NGOs implementing projects on Cat Ba Island chose Story Three, which dealt with environmental protection and economic development (see Appendix 1), as the most significant from the positive change stories. While considerable deliberation over the stories was undertaken by this group, Story Four was chosen as the most significant

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<sup>36</sup> Alternatively, the People's Committee could have arranged a meeting on my behalf, however I felt this would only force residents to participate in the meeting rather than attend on their own free will. Additionally, if I had offered some form of economic incentive, common in Viet Nam, for attending the meeting, people from the commune may have attended. However I did not have ethical consent or funding available to pay people to participate in my research project. And as discussed in this research project, I am not convinced this is the most effective means of ensuring participation.

positive change story as it covered the three ICDP focus areas of community-based tourism, beekeeping and environmental protection. It was also chosen as the group felt it demonstrated that environmental and endangered species protection has worked, and is linked with tourism development. The story was seen to have a broad outlook. However, a comment made during the selection process, was the selection of story may have been influenced by the storytellers ability to express themselves. It was also mentioned that the story did not present a personal account of impact, but rather represented a significant change for Viet Hai in general.

### *Most Negative Social Impacts*

In the selection of negative change stories, representatives from the Viet Hai People's Committee chose Story One (Appendix 2) as the most significant negative social impact. This was one of the vegetable growing impact stories, which was chosen as it highlighted the lack of transparency regarding the implementation of the project. It demonstrated clearly to the group that beneficiaries were unaware of what was required in terms of time and financial investment. Representatives present during the meeting stated that people in the commune felt very unhappy when they had to repay the investment, as they had been unable to make a profit from vegetable growing models introduced by the project. However, one member of the People's Committee felt the story was reactionary and emotional, because it was directed towards the personal interests of the storyteller.

The group representing NGOs on Cat Ba Island were unable to select one story from the negative change stories presented. Instead a number of negative social impacts, as perceived by this group, were discussed. Debt was a considerable impact distinguished by the NGO group, as they felt it had a long-term negative impact (as the project was completed three years ago), which was an obvious, tangible and continual impact. They also mentioned the wider implications of this story for the environment and society in Viet Hai, as there are divisions over who should repay the debt, and it represents distrust in specialists implementing projects. A final decision was made that it was difficult to distinguish one story of negative impact as being more important than the others, as collectively they represented a general distrust of projects as a result of unsuccessful outcomes and negative impacts.

### *Analysis and Comparison*

It is interesting to note the differences in choice and analysis of the stories of social impact selected by representatives from the Viet Hai People's Committee and NGOs. In order to understand the choices of the People's Committee better, it is important to gain an awareness of constraints to the successful implementation of projects in the commune and issues of stakeholder conflict. The 'Coastal Biodiversity Support Project – Ha Long and Cat Ba' has attempted to develop community-based tourism in the local community through the establishment of overnight tourism. This project was approved by Cat Hai District authorities, and has partnered with the Agricultural and Fishery Extension Unit of the Department of Agricultural and Rural Development. However, after approximately two years of project implementation, district authorities continue to prohibit overnight visits by foreign tourists to the commune. The local community in Viet Hai is frustrated by this situation, as it was the

district authorities who introduced and approved the implementation of the project. As is evident from the stories told, the community views tourism as an important economic activity in the commune and has been lobbying the district authorities to approve overnight tourism in the commune. Therefore the selection of stories of most significant change by the Viet Hai People's Committee include a local policy focus, as well as consideration for the economic development of the community, based on constraints currently facing ICDP implementation.

The stories selected by the NGOs are quite different to those by the People's Committee. While both groups chose stories based on their representative outlook in the selection of positive change stories, the NGO group chose their final story as it demonstrated in which way ICDPs had been effective in Viet Hai. Therefore, much more of a project approach to the selection of the stories was applied. Furthermore in their discussion of negative change stories, the NGO representative group related stories to constraints future projects may face when implementing activities in Viet Hai, as they identified the more intangible impacts of project interventions such as disillusionment and development dependency. Also, it is important to note here that during the selection of stories with both groups, and particularly with the Viet Hai People's Committee, the identity of storytellers was clear. Therefore this cannot be excluded as influencing the choice of story selection, highlighting a bias in the application of the MSC technique when undertaken in one small community.

The use of stories was an effective mechanism to gain an insight into the experiences of local people in Viet Hai Commune participating in ICDPs. However, as this discussion has highlighted, the distinction between positive and negative impacts is difficult, and is often dependent on people's perceptions of project effectiveness and expectations of project outcomes. Moreover, the way project impacts are perceived by local authorities and project implementers is diverse, as each is involved in a different aspect of project implementation and has a different relationship with other stakeholder groups.

## **Verification of Findings**

Following field visits to Viet Hai Commune to collect stories of change, interviews were held with project staff based on Cat Ba Island, and a representative from the Viet Hai People's Committee, in order to verify the data collected with local residents. In addition, access to project documents, including M&E reports, was provided by all implementing agencies to assist in the verification process. As will be discussed, interviews with project staff and previous evaluation reports verify many of the research findings, however there are a few inconsistencies which will be outlined here. For the purposes of verification, the results here will be divided into four project activities, rather than social impacts, in order to provide a more detailed assessment of ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai. The four categories include: beekeeping; community-based tourism; environmental awareness and conservation; and vegetable growing models.

## *Beekeeping*

Capacity building for beekeepers has been implemented in Viet Hai for over five years. Beekeeping in Viet Hai, however, has been less successful than beekeeping in other communes on Cat Ba Island. Based on interviews with local residents in Viet Hai, honey and bee hives continue to be routinely collected from the forest and only a marginal number of families who have participated in project activities continue to keep bees. Additionally, many bee colonies in Viet Hai have died or absconded. According to the technical reports developed by the Bee Research and Development Centre for the 'Cat Ba Integrated Conservation and Development Project', it was identified that beekeeping in Viet Hai has developed at a slower pace than other communes on the Island (Pham 2004a, 2004b). The slow pace of development in Viet Hai, was attributed in these reports to the isolation of the commune and hence the lack of knowledge transfer and exchange with other beekeepers on the Island. In response, beekeeping interventions facilitated by AFAP conducted a study tour for Viet Hai beekeepers to other communes on the Island, which was favourably received by participants.<sup>37</sup> However, problems continue to persist. Another reason for the lack of development in beekeeping in Viet Hai, has been attributed to a lack of care for bee colonies by beekeepers:

The beekeepers at Viet Hai do not invest very much time and money for their bees, even they do nothing in some colonies that we advised them to do since the last visit, for example: to replace the colonies in the shade of tree ... [and] to treat bee disease ... (Pham 2004b: 2).

The technical report also identified a number of issues facing beekeeping in Viet Hai commune, including a lack of care by beekeepers.<sup>38</sup> On Cat Ba Island, and even within the community in Viet Hai, there is the perception that people in Viet Hai are lazy and dependent on external assistance. For example, one criticism of beekeepers in Viet Hai relates to their failure to supplement feed to colonies using sugar during difficult seasons, which causes bee colonies to abscond. However, one story collected from respondents may explain the situation better from the perspective of beekeepers in Viet Hai:

The project taught us that when we collect bees and bring them home, we have to feed them sugar. But I can't do it like this because if I do that everyday, I have to provide 1 kg of sugar which is worth 10.000 VND. I can't afford that. We don't even have sugar to feed ourselves, so why would we give it to the bees? So I don't provide food for the bees, they just go into the forest to feed on flowers.

Therefore the failure of beekeeping in Viet Hai is possibly the result of a combination of factors including: poor care of colonies by beekeepers due to their isolation and investment capabilities; insufficient technical support for the context of Viet Hai; and external factors such as high pesticide and fertiliser use in local agricultural production. The final evaluation of the 'Cat Ba Integrated Conservation and Development Project' found that overall the project provided 'significant positive impacts to its intended beneficiaries' and has developed a 'unique

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<sup>37</sup> Information on this activity was provided by an AFAP project staff member during a verification interview.

<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to note that the first project to introduce beekeeping to Viet Hai by the Cat Hai District Women's Union, also reported a lack of adequate investment and care by beekeepers (VWU 2003).



and important opportunity to build on and consolidate these gains into a new local industry, whilst also acknowledging weaknesses and shortfalls (Bektas 2003). Two years on from this evaluation, considerable constraints to the development of beekeeping as an alternative livelihood in Viet Hai remain, and therefore a new approach should be applied if this activity is continued to be supported by ICDP interventions in the local area.

### *Environmental Awareness and Conservation*

While this impact assessment has focussed on social change, rather than the environmental impact of ICDPs, it is clear from the analysis of stories presented above that environmental awareness is a positive outcome of ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai Commune. In particular, interventions implemented by ZGAP that aim to protect the Golden-headed Langur are regarded as having a positive social impact. While all project documents and reports reviewed purport benefits to the environment through ICDP activities, it is beyond the scope of this research project to substantiate such claims. Environmental awareness amongst the local community in Viet Hai on the other hand is evident, including knowledge of the link between tourism, the environment and sustainability. According to project staff working for ZGAP on Cat Ba Island, a major change that has occurred in Viet Hai as a result of project interventions to protect endangered species has been environmental awareness raising and a switch to 'green thinking'. Despite environmental awareness raising, the translation of this awareness into behavioural change in relation to resource extraction remains uncertain, as many people are reluctant to speak out about hunting and environmentally destructive behaviours given the number of ICDP interventions that have been implemented in the commune. The following quote from a local resident in Viet Hai demonstrates that resource extraction activities within the commune continue despite shifts in awareness and attitude regarding the local environment:

The projects, and I mean this regarding projects that do something related to protecting the Golden-headed Langur, are trying to protect the forest right? I have been involved in these activities and they can generate income so that I don't go into the forest. But I can have the same income, or even higher, if I go to the forest to exploit resources. So it doesn't matter, in fact it does not solve any problems. And this affects other projects.

It is important to note that many ICDPs have also implemented environmental awareness raising activities with the local primary school in Viet Hai, through activities such as the 'Green Club'. However, as residents under 18 years of age were not included in this research project, it is difficult to assess the impact of such activities. Therefore further research with school children may be necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of environmental education. Furthermore, the targeting of youth between the ages of 15–24 years of age living in the commune may be a positive next step for ICDPs in Viet Hai, as many respondents indicated that idle youth who are unemployed often enter the forest for hunting and other activities out of boredom and to earn an income.



### *Community-Based Tourism*

The 'Coastal Biodiversity Support Project' which implemented community-based tourism activities in Viet Hai, has resulted in a number of identifiable positive impacts on the local community, such as capacity building, income generation capabilities, and positive social and environmental linkages at the local level. Despite the positive aspects of this project, one problem persists in the implementation of the project – approval from district authorities. In recent correspondence with a project staff member from FFI (personal communication, M. Buiting, June 2006), it is clear the Cat Hai District authorities will not support and provide permission for community-based tourism and overnight tourism in Viet Hai. The rationale for this decision is that Viet Hai is located in the core zone of the National Park, which is contrary to documentation of the new zonation of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve (Madeja 2002), although Viet Hai is surrounded by core zone areas. The other reason stated is that Viet Hai is considered a national defence area given its proximity to the border with China. This is a huge set-back for the project and the local community, and is the key barrier to the successful implementation of the project. However, in response to the setbacks faced in gaining approval for community-based tourism in Viet Hai, one positive outcome can be clearly identified, which was also stated by FFI staff during verification interviews held. The positive impact is the leadership and ownership of the project shown by local authorities in Viet Hai, who have lobbied the Cat Hai District authorities to approve community-based tourism. This outcome may in fact represent the most significant example of community ownership of an ICDP, as highlighted by this quote from a representative of the Viet Hai People's Committee:

I could see that people here have been enthusiastic in taking part in projects, and they want more projects to help. However the problem with this project was that people couldn't sell their products. So the best solution is for people to be able to sell their products here, and I know you know very well that is what we are trying to achieve through the community-based tourism project.

### *Vegetable Growing Models*

As previously discussed, vegetable growing models implemented by the Cat Hai District Women's Union through the project entitled 'Contributing to biodiversity conservation of Cat Ba National Park through community activity', were largely regarded as having a negative impact on local residents. In the final project report submitted to the UNDP, the Women's Union also recognised limitations associated with this project activity:

Although experts were thoughtful and enthusiastic in instructing households, due to living in remote and disadvantaged areas with limited educational conditions and experience exchange opportunities, local people found it difficult to master instructed techniques. Some households in Viet Hai Commune did not know the techniques very well, affecting the yield of onions (VWU 2003).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> As the report was translated into English for the purposes of this research project, page numbers no longer correlate with the original document provided in Vietnamese.

Overall the Women's Union reported that vegetable growing models implemented in Viet Hai had helped to generate employment and income, contributed to reducing hunger and poverty in the area, and solved resource dependency on forest products (VWU 2003). Findings from interviews conducted with beneficiaries in Viet Hai suggest it is difficult to argue that the project had increased household incomes, given many households remain indebted. Conversely, signs that the project has reduced pressure on forest resources is evident as local residents are more self-sufficient in growing their own crops to feed livestock and their families. Consequently it could be argued the project has contributed to the food security of the local area. In addition, some households continue to sell their produce locally and in larger markets outside the commune. Whether this is the result of ICDP interventions implemented by the Women's Union, or simply the result of private enterprise and assistance provided by the Farmer's Association and Women's Union in general, is not clear. What is clear from this research project is the claim by the Cat Hai District Women's Union that no households suffered a loss as a result of this project, and that 100 per cent of household loans have been settled (ibid.), cannot be substantiated by the findings of this impact assessment.

While it is possible to argue that ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai have experienced a mixture of positive and negative outcomes, and in some instances have failed to meet even their own objectives, there is one social impact that is particularly significant – beneficiary disillusionment regarding project outcomes from perceived project ineffectiveness:

People here need projects, urgently. And when people need projects, they all believe in the projects. So when projects first arrive, a lot of people want to participate. However, when projects are not successful, they just know that it is not that good. But local people here do not have much experience, their education level is not high, and they live in a remote area. Some people have only been to Cat Ba Town three times in their entire life, so how can they know what is right? If you tell them one thing, they will follow, because they are poor and when they hear about a foreign project of course they are very happy. They jump at the opportunity to participate in a project, but then they get nothing from it, and people get fed up, that's all.

The following chapter will present a conclusion on the social impacts of ICDPs in Viet Hai Commune, and the implications for people-orientated approaches in Viet Nam, based on the analysis of positive and negative change stories presented in this chapter. Recommendations on the future application of people-oriented approaches to conservation in Viet Hai Commune, and Cat Ba Island will also be presented.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

The social impact of ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai, Cat Ba Island, provides just one example of the constraints facing people-oriented approaches to conservation in the context of Viet Nam. Lessons learned from the case study of the six ICDPs evaluated in this research project include: the difficulties of applying participatory approaches in the context of protected area management in Viet Nam; the unintended social consequences of ICDPs and their impact on communities; the intersection of values and expectations in the determination of impact; and the value of creative and participatory social monitoring in people-oriented approaches to conservation. Findings from research undertaken in Viet Hai Commune, will be explored here in response to the four research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

#### Community Participation in ICDPs

People-oriented approaches to conservation as outlined previously, are based on social and environmental linkages, and are most effective when developed and applied using a participatory process. In the context of protected area management in Viet Nam which applies a top-down approach to governance and management, the inclusion of beneficiaries in project design and implementation remains difficult. For example, as demonstrated by the application of participation in Viet Hai, a top-down approach to community involvement has also been applied during design phases of ICDP interventions, with an evident lack of consultation of beneficiaries and an over reliance on scientific reports and specialists. While this is inline with systems of governance and leadership in Viet Nam, it has resulted in less effective interventions from the perspective of local residents. It is important to note here that implementing agencies such as NGOs and mass organisations are often constrained by funding, therefore donors must ensure financial assistance is available to support project design components such as needs assessments, participatory project designs and vigorous monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, although participatory development is not seen to be commensurate with the socio-political environment in Viet Nam, the inclusion of local leaders and systems of governance in ICDPs does not negate the participation of beneficiaries as hopefully this research project has demonstrated. In fact, support by local leaders in Viet Nam shown during this research project was equal to that shown by implementing agencies. Consequently funding and resources are identified through this research project as the largest impediment to participatory approaches, as well as the capacity of project implementers to apply principles of participatory development in a meaningful way at the local level. In order to ensure more effective ICDP interventions and community ownership of projects in Viet Hai, and possibly throughout Viet Nam, participation of beneficiaries particularly in the design of project activities should be undertaken.

## **Social Impacts Experienced by Residents as a Result of ICDPs**

Despite the lack of participatory processes in the application of people-oriented conservation in Viet Hai, a number of positive social impacts were identified through stories narrated by respondents and the household questionnaire conducted. Importantly, the most significant outcome of ICDPs (particularly for conservation organisations) has been environmental education and conservation of the Golden-headed Langur. Despite the awareness of the threats facing the Golden-headed Langur and protection measures in place, dependency on forest resources for subsistence is evident in Viet Hai and therefore endangered species remain at risk even if they are not targeted by hunters. Furthermore, despite the local perception that livelihood activities associated with ICDPs implemented in Viet Hai have not been successful, there is evidence that income generation and nutritional wellbeing has been increased through tourism development, vegetable production and beekeeping activities. In regards to tourism, external factors may be responsible for increased tourism in the area, given continual constraints in gaining approval from district authorities. It is difficult to attribute economic growth in Viet Nam to development interventions in isolation, particularly during this time of rapid national economic development.

Development interventions can have both a positive impact and a negative impact depending on the perspective of individuals (Burdge and Vanclay, 1996). As identified by project beneficiaries, the most significant and tangible negative social impact as a result of ICDP interventions in Viet Hai is financial debt ensuing from vegetable growing models. However, the more intangible negative impacts combined from all projects may have a longer lasting impact on the community. Firstly, development dependency is evident within the community as a result of continual aid interventions by the Government of Viet Nam, mass organisations and international aid agencies. Responses collected through the household questionnaire highlight people's dependency on projects to solve socioeconomic difficulties they face. Furthermore there is a sense of disillusionment and distrust of aid interventions as a result of the perceived failure of ICDPs in the community, as highlighted by the ongoing refusal for permission to conduct community-based tourism by district authorities. Increased stakeholder conflict may also be a result of project interventions, as the district and commune authorities clash, and the local community loses trust in higher authorities and implementing agencies. Furthermore, the environmental impact of negative social impacts is evidenced in the ongoing resource extraction from CBNP forest areas, as the socioeconomic interventions of ICDPs are regarded as less beneficial than hunting.

## **Social Impacts Identified by Local Leaders and Implementing Agencies**

In the selection of stories by local leaders and project staff it is evident that choices made by both groups, are significantly influenced by the values and expectations of project outcomes. For example, the stories chosen by the People's Committee in Viet Hai have a strong focus on government policy and the socioeconomic concerns the commune faces based on its isolation and location with a protected area. Whereas the stories selected by implementing agencies reflect the project based focus of conservation outcomes and links to socioeconomic development. These stories highlight the perspective of organisations who are diligently

working to protect the forest on Cat Ba Island, while trying also to help communities develop in an area of high stakeholder conflict.

## **A Creative Approach to Social Monitoring in Natural Resource Management**

Finally, there were identified limitations to the application of creative and participatory approaches in this impact assessment using the MSC technique, regarding confidentiality, anonymity and power imbalances in the choice of significant stories. Overall, it is possible to conclude that storytelling conducted through individual interviews, was an effective mechanism for ensuring people had the opportunity to share their stories in a safe environment, and has provided a rich source of information on the context of people's lives in Viet Hai. Combined with the utilisation of the household questionnaire, and triangulation process of verification, MSC was adept at assessing a complex array of projects and participation of beneficiaries in the context of one community. However, the strength of the MSC technique is particularly evident when supported and applied in unison with other research tools. Furthermore, when applied in a sensitive manner in response to the local context, the MSC technique can afford considerable power to the representation of data provided by respondents, to respondents. However, this is subject to application by the evaluator and time constraints. In the context of *ex-poste* SIA and the political environment of impact assessment, MSC may in fact be able to defuse stakeholder conflict by working individually with people, and selecting stories amongst separate stakeholder groups. Therefore, in the context of people-oriented approaches to conservation, MSC may be an effective social monitoring tool to assess the socioeconomic components of ICDPs from the perspective of project beneficiaries, particularly when applied with other techniques such as surveys, interviews and a review of project documentation.

## Conclusion

Overall the efforts made by implementing agencies and local institutions on Cat Ba Island has been considerable, yet the effectiveness of the socioeconomic components of ICDPs is questionable, which in turn has limited the environmental effectiveness of these projects. As demonstrated by this research project, implementation and project design constraints may be the cause rather than an indication of the ineffectiveness of people-oriented approaches to conservation. Indeed many of the stories presented in this research project indicate that socioeconomic interventions are an effective and desirable mechanism for biodiversity conservation in the context of Viet Nam's protected areas.

In conclusion, this research project recommends a stronger emphasis on and care given to the design of ICDPs at the local level in Viet Nam, and the more effective inclusion of the participation and views of a wider spectrum of voices in the community. This commitment to appropriate socioeconomic research to complement environment research in the design of ICDPs, must be made not only by implementing agencies and local partners, but also by donors funding such interventions. Appropriate capacity building for local partners should also be undertaken to ensure effective project management and monitoring.

In regards to people-oriented conservation in Viet Hai Commune, this research project recommends implementing agencies lobby together to support approval of community-based tourism in Viet Hai, however this should be accompanied by an impact assessment of tourism on the local area. Furthermore, a review of the project 'Contributing to biodiversity conservation of Cat Ba National Park through community activity' should be undertaken and any remaining debt repaid by the donor. Finally, the most important recommendation of this research project is to emphasise local ownership and participation of people-oriented conservation projects to ensure sustainability. This recommendation should be considered carefully by each and every project implemented in Viet Hai Commune, on Cat Ba Island and throughout Viet Nam.

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## Appendix One

### Stories of Most Significant Positive Change

#### Story 1

The best thing about the project by XX is protecting endangered species, especially the Golden-headed Langur. Wild animals such as civets, foxes and deer are also endangered species. There has been a working group here since 31 March 1986. The forest was destroyed seriously at the time. Firstly, it was because there was no management. The second reason was the limited awareness of local people about the conservation of endangered species. Thus, people cut down trees and exploited timber, because there was no project to improve the lives of local people. Since projects have been implemented, although they have not been very successful, local people have been able to improve their livelihoods from projects such as beekeeping, the langur conservation project and other poverty reduction projects implemented by mass organizations such as the Farmer's Association, Women's Union or the Veteran's Association which provide credit funds for poverty reduction in order to reduce the impact of local people on the forest. But of course some people still go into the forest. Management is still difficult today. To be frank, it's impossible to manage although some commune officers, the Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project, and the commune police have established a Commune Langur Protection Group which I am the leader of. The group was established on 1 May 2003. It is very effective and we have confiscated two guns, and prevented many people from going into the forest. Take the example of restricting people from cutting down trees in the forest, which has been quite effective.

The positive impact is not only because of good management of the forest by this project, but also because there are other projects, such as the project to grow Indian tamarind by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. This project has encouraged people to develop. The original price was 13.000 VND per plant, but the price has been subsidised by the project, so people in Viet Hai only had to pay 4.000 VND per plant. Many people in Viet Hai are growing Indian tamarind now. My family is also growing 20 plants. So I don't think one project alone can bring a positive impact, I think it is a combination of projects. All the projects in Viet Hai have helped the people to develop their economic situation. There are some shortcomings, but they can be worked out. For example, the most difficult time for the Commune Langur Protection Group is during the dry season. Regarding the beekeeping project, I think we should not encourage it, but it is possible to do. However, the Commune Langur Protection Group needs to explain to the beekeepers that they should be careful when they start fires. This is also the responsibility of the rangers and security team. We need to inform people and explain. And of course we had one training in Cat Ba Town about forest protection in 2003, so we understand the function of the forest. Of course, some people don't understand but some also pretend not to understand. So sometimes it's difficult for us to advocate or explain. But if we are patient, we can do it. I know this because I have advocated and explained to some people and it seems that they have understood. It's very simple, if we are enthusiastic, I think we can

be successful.

About this project, my responsibility is protecting the forest and collaborating with rangers to disseminate and advocate to local people, to raise awareness of how to protect the forest and conserve endangered species. Of course, it's sometimes difficult to make others understand. It's even more difficult to be on duty to check and protect the forest. We have to plan and finish the work. But it's difficult to advocate or disseminate if the people are not enthusiastic. We also need to be enthusiastic.

*Why was this significant for you?*

As a security staff member, I only understand basically that the conservation of rare species of animals is meant to bring long-term benefits, but I don't really know what those benefits are. But indeed we can see some benefits. If we protect the animals well, the first benefit will be from tourism. If people call this area Cat Ba National Park, then it should be a park. If there are only a few trees, nobody will want to come back here. And if Cat Ba National Park protects animals well, more tourists will come. And when the tourists come to Cat Ba, it means that they will come to Viet Hai. Then not only my family, but also others, can generate an income from tourism. For example growing vegetables to sell, or selling poultry, or even working as a motorbike taxi driver. There are many motorbikes here. These are some short-term benefits. We haven't seen the long-term benefits yet. If we preserve rare animals here, then tourism can be developed well, and local people can have more income when we have more tourists.

## Story 2

[The community-based tourism project] is good. If it is carried out it will be more successful than other projects, because it provides a lot of direct help to local people. Here the area has been recognised as a Man and Biosphere Reserve, so a lot of visitors will come. But now there is still one problem, the authorities said Viet Hai does not have good enough conditions. So what are good enough conditions? Now we have power, a road, a school, and a commune health centre. They said the commune health centre here meets national standards, so it is safe. The security here is also very good, we don't have any thieves or drugs. We have no social problems here. If someone does something wrong here, everyone will know about it. So visitors don't need to worry about anything. I think it is very safe here. But they still said we don't have good enough conditions. So why did the project officer come here to establish community-based tourism and now they say the condition of the community is not good enough? So were they just doing that work to kill time, or what? The good thing about projects are the ideas. For example, people grow potatoes now, and although the productivity is not that high, and the technical support was not very good, but still it created some new products. Now the project has gone, but local people here still know how to plant that vegetable. In the future that might develop into livelihood opportunities for local people here.

### *Why was this significant for you?*

Regarding experience, projects can provide local people with more knowledge, when experts come and teach local people, and show them how to do things, and new approaches to economic development. Take tourism for example. People need to think about how to receive visitors, how to serve visitors, and how to behave. That is a lesson from the project, and also how we sell our products, and what tour guides should do and say in order to make visitors remember the place. These are very important, and it was not only a few people who went off to learn about these things, they came to teach all the people. Ten people went on a study tour, and three people out of the ten understand the basics well enough. That is the most successful aspect right? For example, the vegetable growing project. If we didn't have people come to teach us, we would not know a lot of technical knowledge such as when the best time to do something is, and what kind of seeds and insecticides should be used...Even though that project was not successful, but in the future if people want to do that activity again, they will know what they should avoid. So projects might not meet their objectives, but they still have meaning for local people. That is the most positive thing.



### Story 3

In my opinion, the biggest impact of the projects on the lives of local people here has been to help people understand environmental protection and animal conservation. Actually thanks to the help of these projects, the number of people going into the forest to cut down trees and hunt animals has been reduced remarkably. In 1999, when I first came here, a number of people would take guns into the forest, and many children would use slingshots. Instead, people now pay more attention to agricultural production and gardening. In addition, in the past people here did not care about laws. When they broke the law, then they paid a fine. And then the next day they would go back and do the same thing. But now they know how important laws are. Furthermore, without projects, people would not know what a support program is. Clubs have supported farmers here with materials for beekeeping development. I highly appreciate the intangible value of the project which has improved the knowledge of residents here.

There are two projects. I do not remember exactly. The project I remember most is by AFAP, the one where XX was the president. I think that project was very effective because the project staff were very enthusiastic. They summoned all 25 beekeeping club members. Even sometimes they expanded their activities to include people who were not members of the beekeeping club in Viet Hai. They trained these people with advanced technology in keeping bees. Another project is on Golden-headed Langur protection project. There are only a few staff working on the project, so they work at the macro level. They have prevented people from hunting animals. As far as I know, very few Viet Hai residents hunt animals. In particular, since the Golden-headed Langur protection project was implemented, there have been two langurs saved. I saw them when I visited Cuc Phuong National Park and the Primate Rescue Centre.

#### *Why was this significant for you?*

In general, these projects are very important. This is not only my opinion but also the opinion of the authorities. Without the Golden-headed Langur, living conditions of this island would be very poor. Thanks to this animal, this island has become a tourism destination, which helps residents here earn higher incomes than possible through agricultural activities. Tourism has become the cutting edge economic activity in this area. Tourists come here just to see the Golden-headed Langur. This area is also a global biosphere reserve. Shortly, it will be the one year anniversary of Cat Ba Island's selection as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve. In the past, residents here just used to catch fish and plat lychees. But these products were very cheap. Lychees were sold for 1.500–2.000 VND per kilo. In addition, people have to take care of these trees. Meanwhile since tourism appeared here, residents around here just sit around selling cups of tea to tourists. They can make a profit of 500 VND per cup of tea without much effort. Furthermore, when people come here to see the langurs, they also go to the beach to swim. You see, one industry develops then another related service can also develop. This is the rule. You have a higher education than me, you understand this more than me.

## Appendix Two

### Stories of Most Significant Negative Change

#### Story 1

The project of growing green and fresh vegetables had more negative aspects. At first, the process of the project was fine but problems took place by the end of the project cycle. Farmers did not know the price of seeds and fertilizers, so it was difficult to collect the investment back from them. In fact some stages of the project were not clear. Thus, farmers complained a lot about the result of the project. I am an officer, so I did not dare to complain, I didn't say anything.

This is a commune on an island, so the difficulty in this region is transportation which caused the project to be unsuccessful. For example, the green and fresh vegetable project implemented by XX from the University of Agriculture. The project was carried out in collaboration with the Cat Hai District Women's Union. It should have been successful. The project introduced new technology to grow cucumbers and pumpkins. Farmers only knew how many kilos of phosphate and nitrogen fertilizer was needed per perch of land. Yet, they did not know how much a kilo of phosphate or nitrogen fertilizer cost. Farmers just used seeds and fertilizers from the project until the project was reviewed and the investment was taken back. According to my assessment, this project was not successful. We still owe money to that project.

#### *Why was this significant for you?*

The project should have pointed out when the investment would be collected back from people, and what was provided as support, and what farmers had to pay for themselves. We are still angry about this project. Our salaries are still being deducted. But we do not dare to say nothing. Some people have suggested we express anger to higher levels of authority such as to the Viet Hai People's Committee. But the chairman's wife works for the Viet Hai Women's Union which was responsible for that project.